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BRET HARTE

BRET HARTE

A Treatise and a Tribute

BY

London
T. EDGAR PEMBERTON

AUTHOR OF

'A MEMOIR OF E. A. SOTHERN,' 'THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF
T. W. ROBERTSON,' 'CHARLES DICKENS AND THE STAGE,'
'JOHN HARE, COMEDIAN,' 'THE KENDALS,'
ETC., ETC.

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PREFATORY NOTE

74 LANCASTER GATE, W.,
31st August 1900.

MY DEAR PEMBERTON,

History affords many noble examples of sacrifice upon the altar of Friendship, but none, I believe, comparable to your own. When it was discovered that a biography of me was to be published without my consent, and that I had no legal power to prevent it, you offered to preclude the process by taking upon yourself the task of writing it, and by accepting a responsibility which might include the sneers of my enemies, the pity of my friends, and even the criticism of myself. I had been left the only alternative of taking my own life, in an autobiography, had you not, Sir, in a moment of Roman exaltation, proffered the point of your own honourable sword, which had never been drawn in ignoble action, for me to run upon!

What I am trying to say is, that I honestly thank you, even if, in looking over your pages, I shall be conscious, upon an equally classical authority, that I ought to be already dead to have so much good said of me, for there is still the chance of my trying to live up to your charming ideal of your friend,

BRET HARTE.

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BRET HARTE

CHAPTER I

HOW HIS NAME CAME TO ENGLAND

IN that period that is nowadays somewhat slightly alluded to as the 'sixties' (has not Mr Arthur W. Pinero, the greatest dramatist of the 'nineties,' held it up to ridicule?), it was my good fortune to meet at a charming old house, 'The Cedars,' situated in Wright's Lane, Kensington, many of the leading literary men of their day. My delightful host was the late Edward Askew Sothern, the famous Lord Dundreary of the stage, the life and soul of every phase of social life, and the idol of all sorts and conditions of society. I was very young at the

time; but, seeing that I enjoyed and appreciated his literary and dramatic gatherings, Sothern, with characteristic good nature, gave me the 'run of his house,' and, with every nerve at tension point, I used to listen to the talk of famous authors, dramatists and actors. The 'sixties' must have been waning when one day Sothern happened to mention that Charles Dickens had been lunching with him, and had spoken in words of absolute enthusiasm concerning the work of a young American writer named Bret Harte. T. W. Robertson, the author of *Caste*, who was present, said that his friend Tom Hood had been equally impressed with the 'crack of the new whip,' and had declared that a fresh genius had come to light. I have ever been a worshipper at the shrine of Dickens, and to read the work that he admired at once became my ambition. Bret Harte was not so easy to 'buy' in England then as he

most happily is to-day, but friends in America helped me, and I believe I may say that from that day to this—from *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, to his last contribution to an English magazine—I have, with never-ceasing delight, and with profound gratitude, read every word that he has written. When, in later years, it became my good fortune to claim the man as my intimate friend, my sympathy in his writings only increased, for then, privileged to understand his methods and to realise his aims, I could read them over again under a new and more transparent atmosphere. Most of us have had sometimes to recognise the truth of the lines,—

‘Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright,
But viewed too near have neither heat nor light,’

but it is not so in the case of Bret Harte. Those who were fortunate enough to hear him lecture when some twenty years ago

he first came to England will remember how well the subtle intonations of his strong yet tender voice, and the rapid changes of expression on his earnest, handsome face, illustrated his subject, and they will realise the fascination of listening to him as he talks of the early days of the Californian Argonauts, and the tales that he has wound round the Pacific Slope, the pine and the cypress, the buckeye and chaparral, the trail and the town of the Far West.

As Tom Hood was one of the first to admire and even discover him in this country, it is right that at the commencement of this volume I should quote a few lines from his 'Introduction' to the first collection of his stories and poems published on this side the Atlantic.

'Early in the January of "sixty-nine,"' he says, 'I received a batch of new magazines, which, on inspection, proved to be the first five numbers of *The Overland*

Monthly, which had been started at San Francisco in the July preceding. I had been for some time acquainted with that most clever and audacious print, *The San Francisco Newsletter*, and was therefore prepared to find merits in the new periodical. Nevertheless, to eyes accustomed to the gorgeous covers and superfine getting-up of our English magazines, the appearance of the new-comer was not attractive. It was printed on paper seemingly related to that species in which Beauty puts away her ringlets for the night, and its brown wrapper was of texture and tint suggestive of parcels of grocery. The title, plainly set forth in ordinary type, ran—" *The Overland Monthly*, devoted to the Development of the Country," with a small vignette of a bear crossing a railway track.'

Let me note in parenthesis that this design was the work of Bret Harte, and was intended to show how the 'grizzly,'

so long the undisturbed monarch of the woods and cañons, was at last face to face with the ubiquitous engineer.

Indeed, he knew and understood his 'grizzly' well, for did he not, in one of his earliest poems, speak of him in the following lines :—

‘ Coward,—of heroic size,
In whose lazy muscles lies
Strength we fear and yet despise ;
Savage,—whose relentless tusks
Are content with acorn husks ;
Robber,—whose exploits ne’er soared
O’er the bee or squirrel’s hoard ;
Whiskered chin and feeble nose,
Claws of steel on baby toes,—
Here, in solitude and shade,
Shambling, shuffling, plantigrade,
Be thy courses undismayed.

Here, where Nature makes thy bed,
Let thy rude half-human tread
Point to hidden Indian springs
Lost in ferns and fragrant grasses,
Hovered o’er by timid wings,
Where the wood-duck lightly passes,
Where the wild bee holds her sweets,
Epicurean retreats,

Fit for thee and better than
Fearful spoils of dangerous man.

In thy fat-jowled deviltry
Friar Tuck shall live in thee ;
Thou mayst levy tithe and dole ;
Thou shalt spread the woodland cheer,
From the pilgrim taking toll ;
Match thy cunning with his fear ;
Eat and drink, and have thy fill,
Yet remain an outlaw still.'

The delightful simile drawn between Friar Tuck and 'grizzly' shows how well (even in those far-off days) Bret Harte knew his English folk-lore. I wonder how many young men of to-day trouble themselves about Robin Hood and his merry men of Sherwood Forest, and the legends that still cling to Nottingham Town?

But though the poet could see through 'grizzly's' rather pretentious character, he confesses that he was not a pleasant fellow to meet. He has told me how, in a lonely, steep-sided cañon, he once came

face to face with one of these huge, ungainly creatures. Sometimes on all fours it approached, at others erect on its hind legs it watched him. He knew that flight would excite the formidable creature's curiosity and possibly lead to fatal results, so he kept steadily on his way until he was almost within ten yards of his new acquaintance. Then Mr Bruin, for no perceptible reason, suddenly altered his course, and without even a nod of his great head, or a sign from his small eyes, turned aside, and, scrambling up the cañon's side, disappeared. It was a bad quarter of an hour for the author of 'Grizzly,' but it thus ended happily.

But I am straying away from my story of how Bret Harte's name came to England. Still writing of *The Overland Monthly*, Tom Hood goes on to say, 'But if the exterior was unpretentious, the contents were attractive enough. The magazine had, as it were, a fragrance of

its own, like "a spray of Western pine." The articles were fresh and original, the subjects they treated of were novel and interesting.

' The editor's name did not appear, but in a "gossip" entitled "Etc.," at the end of each number, he from time to time inserted little bits of verse that had a local flavour that was very agreeable. In the "Etc." of number one appeared the "Mud Flat" poem. The second number contained *The Luck of Roaring Camp*. The critiques on new books here and there betrayed his hand. The "Etc." in number five opened with a quaint mention of an earth-wave, which, passing under San Francisco, had left its record upon some sheets of the number by the falling of the roof of the building in which they were stored, and asking readers, it being too late to reprint, to pardon 'any blemishes on those "signatures" to which the great earthquake had added its mark.

The sixth number arrived, and, turning to the index, I found that the author's names were given there, and that the writer of the articles which had interested me most was F. B. Harte. With the first number of the second volume—the Holiday Number—he resumed the "*Roaring Camp*" vein in *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*.

'From that time he became a writer to be looked for, and he never disappointed me. In prose or verse he was sure to be good, whether he was humorous or pathetic. In volume three the index made a further revelation of his name as Francis Bret Harte.

'In the number for September 1870 appeared, not the best, but the most popular of his writings, *Plain Language from Truthful James*, or, as it is now called, *The Heathen Chinee*. It came at a time when all America was debating "the Chinese cheap labour" question, some of the disputants appealing to such strong

arguments as brickbats and revolvers. But the poem had a vitality beyond the mere timeliness of its appearance, or it would scarcely have achieved the immediate success which it won in England.'

Since 1870 a new generation has sprung into existence, but in spite of the thirty years that have elapsed since his creation, the doings of Ah Sin and the sayings of Truthful James are still as familiar amongst us as household words.

Tom Hood winds up his appreciation by saying, 'I must, in concluding this brief preface, acknowledge my indebtedness for the chief facts in it to my friend Mr Justin M'Carthy, who, on his recent return from America, brought a few pleasant words from Bret Harte in allusion to my having been one of the first to take note of his work in England—a fact due rather to my good luck in receiving early copies of *The Overland* than to any merit in recognising what anyone who read

his contributions must have recognised—the undoubted genius of Bret Harte.'

Hood was then the editor of *Fun*, and those who turn over the early (and best) leaves of that journal will see how he was never tired of bringing the young American author before the English public. Poor Hood! How he would have loved to listen—as I have done—to Bret Harte's delighted talk of his father's beautiful and brilliant verses!

Dickens, too, and as I have already mentioned, had found him out. His biographer, John Forster records:—

‘Not many months before my friend’s death he had sent me two *Overland Monthly*lies, containing two sketches by a young American writer far away in California, *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, and *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, in which he had found such subtle strokes of character as he had not anywhere else in late years discovered; the manner resembling him-

self, but the matter fresh to a degree that had surprised him; the painting in all respects masterly, and the wild, rude thing painted a quite wonderful reality. I have rarely known him more honestly moved. A few months passed; telegraph wires flashed over the world that he had passed away on the 9th of June, and the young writer of whom he had then written to me, all unconscious of that praise, put his tribute of gratefulness and sorrow into the poem called "Dickens in Camp." It embodies the same kind of incident which had so affected the master himself in the papers to which I have referred; it shows the gentler influences, which, in even those Californian wilds, can restore outlawed "roaring camps" to silence and humanity; and there is hardly any form of posthumous tribute which I can imagine likely to have better satisfied his desire of fame, than one which should thus connect, with the special favourite among all his heroines,

the restraints and authority exerted by his genius over the rudest and least civilised of competitors in that far, fierce race for wealth.'

Most English readers are familiar with that beautiful poem which tells how a party of rough Californian miners, sitting by the roaring camp-fire beneath the snow-capped Sierras, and to the accompaniment of the song of the swiftly-flowing river, were held spellbound, while one of them, from a treasured copy of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, read to them anew the dear old story of how Nell and her grandfather wandered on English meadows. Thousands of English men and women were grateful to the American poet who thus paid his tribute to their loved author :—

'Lost is that camp and wasted all its fire,
And he who wrought that spell ?—
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,
Ye have one tale to tell !

Lost is that camp ! but let its fragrant story
Blend with the breath that thrills

With hop-vines' incense all the pensive glory
That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and holly
And laurel wreaths entwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly,
This spray of Western pine !'

Bret Harte has told me the little history of that ever-green poem, of how it was written on the day that the news of the death of Dickens reached him at San Rafael, California, while the last sheets of the July *Overland Monthly*, already edited by him, were going to press. After stifling the emotion that he felt (for he dearly loved his 'Boz'), he hurriedly sent his first and only draft of the verses, which were destined to live so long, to the office at San Francisco. They were written in two or three hours, and at his urgent request the publication of the magazine was held back until they could appear.

In a letter touching upon this poem he

has said, 'I remember that it was very hastily but very honestly written, and it is fair to add that it was not until later that I knew for the first time that those gentle and wonderful eyes, which I was only thinking of as being closed for ever, had ever rested kindly upon a single line of mine.'

Yes, on the day when, amidst 'a rain of tears and flowers,'—many flowers brought by unknown hands, many tears shed from unknown eyes—Charles Dickens was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, a letter in his handwriting (the handwriting that has brought merriment and comfort to millions), addressed to Bret Harte, was on its way across the Atlantic. It was a letter in his usual hearty, breezy style, telling the young author how highly he thought of his work, asking him to contribute to *All the Year Round* (of which he was then editor), and bidding him, when he came to England, which he was 'certain

soon to do,' to visit him at his delightful home at 'Gad's Hill'—'a spot with which you are, no doubt, already familiar in connection with one William Shakespeare and a certain Sir John Falstaff.'

The prophecy of Dickens was a true one. Though he, alas! did not live to delight in its fulfilment, Bret Harte (stimulated, possibly, by such credentials as these) came to England, and for many years has made his home amongst us, gaining a concourse of devoted and distinguished friends, and ever, by reason of his steady and finished work, increasing the number of his admiring English readers.

And yet I doubt if he quite realises his popularity in these islands. It has not fallen to his lot, as it has to mine, to mix much, and intimately, with the middle and working classes of this country—with the people who, like the patrons of the pit and gallery of the theatres, make up

decidedly the most appreciative, and often the most intelligent, of audiences. Amongst such people I have found his name as well known and loved as that of Sir Walter Scott, or Dickens, or Thackeray, or any of the poets whose mission is not to write incomprehensibly but to gladden the land.

In a word, he is understood by the people. His earlier works are ever being re-read, quoted, and, it must be added, mis-quoted, and his new tales and poems are hailed with delight.

Not very long ago a short story of his was published in a paper called *The Golden Penny*—a story of three truant Californian schoolboys and an adventure with a grizzly bear.

I often have to pass through a somewhat sordid midland English street, where schoolboys swarm, and fried fish and cheap newspapers seem to monopolise the trade. On a certain day there was

a great run (I didn't know why) on *The Golden Penny*, and little clusters of boys, with copies of the paper in their hands, were talking to each other in eager fashion. I asked one of them what all the excitement was about, and he said (for a wonder he was a civil schoolboy), 'You go and buy *The Golden Penny*, and read Bret Harte's latest.'

I invested my penny, read the stirring, humorous and picturesque little story (just the thing for boys), and realised how that American pen had roused the hearts of the youngest, and not too easily roused, young England of 1900.

CHAPTER II

HOW HIS NAME WAS MADE

FRANCIS BRET HARTE was born at Albany, State of New York, on August 25, 1839. His father—a very famous scholar and erudite man—was Professor of Greek at the Albany College, and thus his boyhood was spent in the atmosphere of literature. As we have seen in later days he dropped the name of Francis, using only that of Bret, which was the surname of his father's mother. His father was a Roman Catholic, his mother a Church woman, and he, when he grew to the age when he could think things out for himself, became a Unitarian. Later, I think, his belief solidified into that most beautiful of all religions—*infinite toleration of other people's*

beliefs, and intense adoration of the works of the Creator.

Sir Thomas Moore has set down that,—

‘The contemplating God in His works, and the adoring Him for them, is a very acceptable piece of worship.’

Bret Harte, as his stories show, loves to find the germ of good in everything, however sordid its environment; and though anything like cant or narrow-mindedness is detestable to him, I have never heard him speak slightly of the creeds of others, however far removed they might be from his own beautiful ideas regarding the real truth of things.

He is a believer in science, but I know he holds with Herbert Spencer that, ‘so far from science being irreligious, as many think, it is the neglect of science that is irreligious—it is the refusal to study surrounding creation that is irreligious.’

Bret Harte’s boyhood was no doubt passed in the usual way. His education

had the advantage of his father's supervision, and he read a great deal on his own account, soon evincing his keen love of romance and poetry as well as his intense sense of humour. His admiration for Charles Dickens began when he read *Dombey and Son* as it first came out in monthly numbers. This was in 1846, when he was only seven years of age. But all too early he found himself fatherless, and he was only seventeen when, following the example of numberless young fellows of spirit, he resolved to commence life on his own account and to seek fortune with the Californian Argonauts. That he carried his home-lore in a warm corner of his heart is proved by his charming story called *Thankful Blossom*. I have often heard it said that the name of this sweet maiden is more far-fetched than fanciful, but as a matter of truth she was an ancestress of Bret Harte's, and really bore that name. It was written in Morristown, New

Jersey, and no doubt gained inspiration from the fact that it was the historic scene of Washington's headquarters, and that the great general must have experienced the same bitter winter so graphically described by the author of the tale.

He did not return to Albany until many years had elapsed and his name had become world-famous. His mission then was to deliver one of his delightful lectures before the literary society that, in far-off days, his father had founded. In his own humorous way he has told me how he expected to feel a great thrill of enthusiasm coupled with emotion when he once more stood within the precincts of his birthplace, and how, to his amazement, if not to his disappointment, that thrill never came. Most of us know that his experience was by no means an uncommon one, but few men could describe it as he does.

California was a country likely to fascinate a young fellow of Bret Harte's romantic

and imaginative temperament. The natural grandeur and beauty of it, his knowledge of its early occupation by the Spanish, and the legends clinging to the old mission-houses, made it on the one hand an unexplored fairyland for fancy, and we can picture all that he had in his mind when he wrote 'The Angelus,'—heard at the Mission Dolores in 1868:—

'Bells of the Past, whose long-forgotten music
Still fills the wide expanse,
Tingeing the sober twilight of the Present
With colours of romance !

• • • • •
Borne on the swell of your long waves receding,
I touch the farthest past—
I see the dying glow of Spanish glory,
The sunset dream and last !

Before me rise the dome-shaped mission towers,
The white Presidio ;
The swart commander in his leathern jerkin,
The priest in stole of snow.'

And then in startling contrast to this dreamy vision and the leisurely Spaniards who had

'Hasta Mañana' ('Wait till to-morrow') for one of their favourite bywords, he found the extraordinary crowd of later-day humanity jostling against each other in their hot haste to be among the first in the wild and exciting race for wealth. It must have been an extraordinary and weird experience. Hordes of strong men clad in red shirts and high boots striving against each other in the fierce fight for gold; all young and muscular men, for no old man or semi-invalid could have borne the roughness and the fatigue of the life. 'On one occasion,' he has recorded, 'I remember an elderly man—he was fifty, perhaps, but he had a grey beard—and he was pointed out as a curiosity, and men turned to look at him as they would have looked at any other unfamiliar object.' And yet these men, roughing it in a manner that would be intolerable even to our English 'navvies,' were civilised, many of them being men

of high attainments, but anxious (no doubt in full recollection of bitter disappointments) to win their way to fortune by a short cut. Women were almost unknown; but when they did appear in the camps, and proved themselves worthy of regard, they were treated with that tenderness and chivalry that appealed to the heart of the gently-nurtured son of the Albany professor, and formed the theme for so many of his exquisite stories. Such an extraordinary change in the life of one only approaching manhood has surely hardly ever been.

But he lived among a restless and motley crew, and he too became restless, and turned his facile hand to many things. At first, and as a matter of course, he was all for gold-finding, and with pick and shovel worked side by side with his quaint comrades. But it was not likely that such work would suit him, and having gained experience and satisfied his curiosity, he

discarded his mining tools and became a messenger in the employ of the Adams Express Company. His business was to sit beside the drivers of the stage-coaches in charge of the gold and letters which the company undertook to deliver from the camp miners to the banks, or to their friends in the nearest towns. Considering that stage robberies were the order of the day, and very frequent, this experience was not only an exciting but a dangerous one. To it, however, his readers owe much, for in *Snow Bound at Eagle's* and other equally stirring stories we get vivid pictures of the 'holding up' of stage-coaches by lawless, determined, yet half good-natured, highwaymen. To it, moreover, we probably owe that wonderfully humorous picture of the Californian coach-driver—Yuba Bill—the worthy American companion picture to our English Mr Weller, senior. A far more realistic but an equally attractive portrait. Bret Harte

had no idea in those days that he would ever become famous as an author—indeed, he seems to have thought little of writing—but all the time he was unknowingly drinking in ideas, and learning to study character, ultimately to be limned with a minuteness and skill worthy of Fielding or Smollett, Thackeray or Dickens. Why, with the exception of *Gabriel Conroy* (now holding its place among the 'one hundred best novels'), Bret Harte did not write at the same length as his famous predecessors will presently be seen. He was destined to become the pioneer of a new and very favourite form of fiction.

But while he was thus roughing it in mining camps and on stage-coaches he was not forgetting what was due to himself and his earlier surroundings. At one of the missions he placed himself under the care of a kindly and learned priest, and, as often as opportunity permitted, continued his studies with him. We all

know how what we may call the 'Spanish motive' runs gracefully and melodiously through his works, and, indeed, forms the main theme of some of his most dramatic stories. Probably we all like his strongly-marked Californian characters the best, but we still have a warm place in our hearts for the gentle surroundings and peaceful life of the old missions, redolent as they are with the fragrance of romance.

I often wonder if he had these old reading days in his mind when he described the sleepy old town in the Southern country, where 'the whole street stopped as usual at the very door of the mission church, a few hundred yards further on, and under the shadow of the two belfry towers at each angle of the façade, as if this were the *ultima thule* of every traveller. But all that the eye rested on was ruined, worn and crumbling. The *adobe* houses were cracked by the incessant sunshine of the

half-year-long summer, or the more intermittent earthquake shock; the paved courtyard of the *fonda* was so uneven and sunken in the centre that the lumbering waggon and faded *diligencia* stood on an incline, and the mules with difficulty kept their footing while being unladen; the whitened plaster had fallen from the feet of the two pillars that flanked the mission doorway, like bandages from a gouty limb, leaving the reddish core of *adobe* visible; there were apparently as many broken tiles in the streets and alleys as there were on the heavy red roofs that everywhere asserted themselves—and even seemed to slide down the crumbling walls to the ground. There were hopeless gaps in *grille* and grating of doorways and windows, where the iron bars had dropped helplessly out, or were bent at different angles. The walls of the peaceful mission garden and the warlike *Presidio* were alike lost in

the escalading vines or levelled by the pushing boughs of gnarled pear and olive trees that now surmounted them. The dust lay thick and impalpable in hollow and gutter, and rose in little vapoury clouds with a soft detonation at every stroke of the horses' hoofs. Over all this dust and ruin idleness seemed to reign supreme. From the velvet-jacketed figures lounging motionless in the shadows of the open doorways—so motionless that only the lazy drift of cigarette smoke betokened their breathing—to the reclining *peons* in the shade of a catalpa, or the squatting Indians in the *arrovo*—all was sloth and dirt.'

And then the description of the interior of the mission church—'The heavily-timbered, roughly-hewn roof, barred with alternate bands of blue and Indian red, the crimson hangings, the gold-and-black draperies, affected this religious back-woodsman exactly as they were designed

to affect the heathen and acolytes for whose conversion the temple had been reared. He could hardly take his eyes from the tinsel-crowned "Mother of Heaven," resplendent in white and gold and glittering with jewels; the radiant shield before the Host, illuminated by tall, spectral candles in the obscurity of the altar, dazzled him like the rayed disc of the setting sun.'

Truly two wonderful pieces of word-painting! Another of his experiences was that of an assistant in a drug store, and although this did not last long, he must have picked up a good deal there, for to this day he can speak with authority as to the virtues and properties of medicines. These dispensing days peep out in many of his stories, and quite recently he wrote a most charming one about a plain Californian girl, who, having lost the track of her father's waggon, wandered away into the woods, and, in all ignorance, dis-

covering an arsenical spring, and frequently bathing in it, became one of the most beautiful of women. It is the old tale! Whatever Bret Harte did or saw, in those far-off and restless days, was unconsciously stored away in his mind and put to good purpose in the days to come. Many years have elapsed since he visited California, and yet, when a new story is wanted (and a new story from his ever-flowing pen is constantly in demand), he is as ready with a subject as the nursery gardener, who carefully tends his hothouses, is with newly-blown flowers. I have an idea that the genial and shrewd Dr Duchesne, who figures in so many well-known pages, owes his existence to these days spent in the drug store.

Then he became a schoolmaster—and, no doubt, the immortal Mliss and the too-fascinating Cressy were his pupils. How wonderful are the pictures he records of the weary but conscientious tutor trying

to drill into listless ears the lessons that they loathed. But all the time he was inhaling an atmosphere that was destined to make some of those disappointing, irritating children popular wherever the English language is read and spoken. Who does not know and love Mliss? Who does not feel the attraction of that dangerous Miss Cressy? Who does not sympathise with 'The Master' sitting at his uncongenial task in the primitive little school-house at Smith's Pocket 'with some open copy books before him, carefully making those bold and full characters which are supposed to combine the extremes of chirographical and moral excellence, and had got as far as "Riches are deceitful," and was elaborating the noun with an insincerity of flourish that was quite in the spirit of his text, when he heard a gentle tapping.' The tapper was sweet Mliss, and then, as if by the wave of a magician's wand, the dreariness of the uncongenial

schoolhouse vanishes. And again, when he writes of the academy which the schoolmaster enters with 'a certain precaution begotten of his experience in once finding a small but sociable rattlesnake coiled up near the threshold. A slight disturbance which followed his intrusion showed the value of that precaution, and the fact that the room had already been used for various private and peaceful gatherings of animated nature. An irregular attendance of yellow birds and squirrels dismissed themselves hurriedly through the broken floor and windows, but a golden lizard, stiffened suddenly into stony fright on the edge of an open arithmetic, touched the heart of the master so strongly by its resemblance to some kept-in and forgotten scholar who had succumbed over the task he could not accomplish, that he was seized with compunction.'

And then the weary, dreary school-time which 'continued for two hours with short

sighs, corrugations of small foreheads, the complaining cries and scratching of slate-pencils over slates, and other signs of minor anguish among the more youthful of the flock ; and with more or less whisperings, movements of the lips, and unconscious soliloquy among the older pupils. The master moved slowly up and down the aisle with a word of encouragement or explanation here and there, stopping with his hands behind him to gaze abstractedly out of the windows, to the wondering envy of the little ones. A faint hum, as of invisible insects, gradually pervaded the school ; the more persistent droning of a large bee had become dangerously soporific. The hot breath of the pines without had invaded the doors and windows ; the warped shingles and weather-boarding at times creaked and snapped under the rays of the vertical and unclouded sun. A gentle perspiration broke out like a mild epidemic in the infant class ; little curls

became damp, long lashes limp, round eyes moist, and small eyelids heavy.'

It was to this establishment that the dangerous and provokingly pretty Miss Cressy (as aggravating and captivating a little beauty as Dolly Varden) came; and we may be quite sure that in both these graphically-described schools the master was Bret Harte.

There were soldiering days, too. In the warfare with the Indians he fought through two campaigns to a staff appointment; and when the American Civil War broke out he joined the Volunteer City Guard of San Francisco, as a reservist. His experiences with the Indians have been fully utilised in his glowing pages, and we have sketches as vivid and striking as that of Washington Irving's *Philip of Pokanoket*. Notably there is a weird study of Indian life in his quite recently written story, *The Ancestors of Peter Atherly*.

By the way, as I have mentioned the

name of Washington Irving, let me here note Brete Harte's intense admiration for his distinguished countryman and brother author. He holds that his style is beyond imitation and beyond praise, and, indeed, while we were walking together, he once quoted some lines from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* in a way so full of delight and appreciation that made me realise the full beauty of a word-picture. They describe 'some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty Hudson,' and they flow thus:— 'The sun gradually wheeled his broad disc into the west. The wide bosom of the Tappaan Zee lay motionless and glossy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky, without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradually into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid-

heaven. A slanting ray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark grey and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air.'

Indeed it is a great treat to be with Bret Harte when he lets his marvellous memory loose, and recalls passages from his favourite authors. A great critic once said that to see Edmund Kean act Lear, Othello or Macbeth, was to read Shakespeare by flashes of lightning. To hear Bret Harte conjure up passages from the works he loves and knows so well is like listening to their writers under the soothing sheen of the harvest moon.

Of the Civil War he has, as we all know, given us both in poetry and prose a whole

gallery of striking pictures. Notably so in that noble story entitled *Clarence*, where the horrors of a battlefield are brought before us in colours so vivid that they seem to carry with them the clamour of the conquerors, the sorrow for the slain.

But, whatever his passing vocation might be, consciously or unconsciously, he was ever slowly but surely drifting into the current of his true calling. The desire to pour 'the thoughts that burst their channel into song' must always have been with him, for he has told how, at the age of eleven, he had written a poem called 'Autumn Musings.' It was satirical in character, and cast upon the fading year the cynical light of his repressed dissatisfaction with things in general. He sent it to the New York *Sunday Atlas*, and when he saw it in print his feelings seem to have been something akin to the startled hen who has hatched a duck's egg. Then followed the cruel thing that so often happened in, happily,

bygone days. The family of the sensitive young writer, unable, as I take it, to understand or appreciate him, sneered at this effort, and warned him that poetry meant disaster. 'Sometimes,' he has said, 'I wonder that I ever wrote another line of verse.' Just as the mother duck, pictured by Hans Christian Andersen, never knew that when she hatched the poor, despised 'ugly duckling' she had been sitting on a swan's egg, so human parents over and over again forget that it is possible for them to bring into the world children whose intellects greatly exceed their own.

Travelling from camp to city, Bret Harte, willing to turn his ready hand to anything, learned to set type—for though literature has ever been the end and aim of his ambition, he from the first determined to have some craft at his fingers' ends that would make him independent of it as a means of livelihood. Hence his acceptance in later years of political and editorial posts,

for though he never had an article refused by an editor or publisher, he lacked the self-confidence which in the case of hundreds is unimpaired by constant disappointment. He maintains that this rule has had its influence on his work, inasmuch as it has given him liberty to write to please himself, instead of writing 'to order,' and in accordance with the views of the purchaser of his work.

In 1864 he occupied the post of Secretary to the Government Mint at San Francisco, and it was then his pen began to flow. He quickly attracted the attention of Mrs General Fremont—the wife of 'The Pathfinder'—who introduced him to Thomas Starr King, an eminent man of letters and famous Unitarian preacher, who also saw and predicted the brilliant future that lay before the eager young man. These became his warm friends, advisers and encouragers, and it was under King's presidency that his soul-stirring poem, 'The Reveille,'

was, while the great Civil War was raging, recited in public.

Every admirer of Bret Harte knows the lilt of the wonderful lines, commencing with :—

‘ “Hark ! I hear the tramp of thousands,
And of armed men the hum ;
Lo ! a nation’s hosts have gathered
Round the quick alarming drum,
Saying, Come,
Freemen, Come,
Ere your heritage be wasted,” said the quick alarming
drum,’

knows how the hearts of the hesitating and even the recreant are probed until the verses wind up with the grand peroration :—

‘ Thus they answered, hoping, fearing,
Some in faith, and doubting some,
Till a trumpet-voice proclaiming,
Said, “ My chosen people, come ! ”
Then the drum
Lo ! was dumb,
For the great heart of the nation, throbbing, answered,
“ Lord, we come ! ”’

These noble lines have aroused enthusi-

asm in thousands of readers, and I was amazed when the author told me that at their first public recitation, to his intense disappointment, they seemed to make little or no impression. To-day he has the satisfaction of knowing that they have lived, and will live, as long as poetry is understood and appreciated.

To his kindly president on that somewhat depressing occasion Bret Harte has paid graceful tribute in his verses entitled 'On a Pen of Thomas Starr King':—

'This is the reed the dead musician dropped,
With tuneful magic in its sheath still hidden ;
The prompt allegro of its music stopped,
Its melodies unbidden.

But who shall finish the unfinished strain,
Or wake the instrument to awe and wonder,
And bid the slender barrel breathe again,
An organ-pipe of thunder !

• • • •
But all in vain the enchanter's wand we wave ;
No stroke of ours recalls his magic vision ;
The incantation that his power gave
Sleeps with the dead magician.'

As early as 1863 Bret Harte was busily at work on contributions to the publications of San Francisco. At that time he was setting type in the office of *The Golden Era*, a literary weekly paper of some local renown. Modestly enough he offered to the editors occasional contributions, which he had already set up with his own composing stick, and these proved so attractive that he was soon promoted from the 'case' to the editorial room. And now, having found his true calling, and with the opportunity for exercising it, poems and tales began to appear, so attractive at the time, and so worthy in themselves, that they find their honoured place in his collected works of to-day.

In 1865 his first volume of verse appeared. It bore the title of *The Lost Galleon*, but it also contained various contributions to the lyrics of the Civil War, and some humorous pieces destined to become world-famous. It is in the beauti-

fully-conceived ‘Lost Galleon’ that those sweetly tender lines occur:—

‘Never a tear bedims the eye
That time and patience will not dry ;
Never a lip is curved with pain
That can’t be kissed into smiles again.’

Writing of him at this period, his old colleague, Mr Noah Brooks, has said, ‘Harte always manifested in his work that fastidiousness in choice of words which has characterised him ever since. It was humorously complained of him that he filled the newspaper office wastepaper baskets with his self-rejected manuscripts and produced next to nothing for the printer. Once, assigned to the task of writing an obituary article that was not to extend “two stickfuls” in length, he actually filled a waste-basket with fragments of “copy” which he tore up before he produced the requisite amount of matter. Going into my own editorial room early one forenoon, I found Harte at my desk

writing a little note to make an appointment with me to dine together later in the day. Seeing me, he started up with the remark that my early arrival at the office would obviate the necessity of his finishing the note which he was writing, and which he tore up as he spoke. When, this little matter settled, Harte had gone out, crumbling in his hand the fragments of the unfinished note, I chanced to look into the waste-basket, and saw a litter of paper carrying Harte's familiar handwriting, and turning over the basket with quiet amusement, I discovered that he had left there the rejected manuscript of no less than three summonses, which any other man would have disposed of in something like this order:—"Dear Brooks,—We will dine together at Louis Dingeon's at 6.30 p.m. to-night."

Mr Densmore—a colleague of Bret Harte's on the literary staff of *The Golden Era*—has said, 'While I was writing

column after column, Bret Harte would be sitting looking at his desk. And finally he would evolve a paragraph, but that paragraph would be worth everything else in the paper.'

This extreme care in his authorship characterises him to this day, and those who appreciate him understand how it adds lustre to his work. Truly he is the Meissonier among the artists of word-pictures. There were some geniuses working for *The Golden Era* and other Californian journals. Joaquin Miller, whose name will always hold its place in the annals of Californian literature, was a contributor to its columns, and it was in them that Samuel Clemens, destined to become world-famous under his *nom de guerre* of Mark Twain, got one of his first chances.

Bret Harte has himself told the story of how while occupied with his secretarial duties at the San Francisco Mint—and his literary work religiously carried on

outside mint hours—George Barnes, a brother journalist, introduced him to a young man whose appearance was decidedly interesting. ‘His head,’ he writes, ‘was striking. He had the curly hair, the aquiline nose, and even the aquiline eye—an eye so eagle-like that a second lid would not have surprised me—of an unusual and dominant nature. His eyebrows were very thick and bushy. His dress was careless, and his general manner one of supreme indifference to surroundings and circumstances. Barnes introduced him as Mr Sam Clemens, and remarked that he had shown a very unusual talent in a number of newspapers contributed over the signature of “Mark Twain.” We talked on different topics, and about a month afterwards Clemens dropped in upon me again. He had been away in the mining districts on some newspaper assignment in the meantime. In the course of conversation he remarked that the unearthly laziness

that prevailed in the town he had been visiting was beyond anything in his previous experience. He said the men did nothing all day long but sit around the bar-room stove, spit, and "swop lies." He spoke in a slow, rather satirical drawl, which was in itself irresistible. He went on to tell one of those extravagant stories, and half unconsciously dropped into the lazy tone and manner of the original narrator. It was as graphic as it was delicious. I asked him to tell it again to a friend who came in, and then asked him to write it out for *The Californian*. He did so, and when published it was an emphatic success. It was the first work of his that attracted general attention, and it crossed the Sierras for an Eastern reading. The story was *The Jumping Frog of Calaveras*. It is now known and laughed over, I suppose, wherever the English language is spoken; but it will never be as funny to anyone in print as it was to

me, told for the first time by the unknown Twain himself on that morning in the San Francisco Mint.'

It was, no doubt, through these performances that Mark Twain became a contributor to *The Golden Era*, and one scrap of characteristic art criticism from his pen that appeared in the columns of that journal has been recorded. It deals with a famous picture, 'Samson and Delilah,' then being exhibited in San Francisco, and it runs as follows:—'Now what is the first thing you see in looking at this picture down at the Bank Exchange? Is it the gleaming eyes and fine face of Samson? or the muscular Philistine gazing furtively at the lovely Delilah? or is it the rich drapery? or is it the truth to nature in that pretty foot? No, sir. The first thing that catches the eye is the scissors on the floor at her feet. Them scissors is too modern—thar warn't no scissors like them in them days—by a d—d sight.'

Bret Harte subsequently became editor of *The Californian*, the literary weekly to whose pages he had recommended Mark Twain's *Jumping Frog*, but his first real chance came with the inception of *The Overland Monthly*, with the bear-on-the-railway-track emblem to which I have already alluded.

Concerning this Bret Harte has told me, 'The bear (a grizzly *Ursus horribilis*) is shown standing on the track apparently arrested by the approach of the (invisible) train, and rather resenting it. He is, however, rather "at gaze" than "at bay." That was my idea, the beginning of the conflict between barbarian and civilisation.'

It remains the symbol of *The Overland Monthly* to this day.

Of the sending forth of a venture that was to make at least one author famous, let me quote Mr Noah Brooks.

'When,' he writes, 'Mr Anton Roman, a public-spirited and enterprising San

Francisco publisher, projected the publication of a literary magazine in 1868, no name but Bret Harte's was considered in the matter of choice of an editor. All the literary men in San Francisco—and their number was by no means small—hailed Mr Roman's project with enthusiasm, and they agreed to assist at the launching of the enterprise. Harte accepted the responsibility of editor-in-chief of *The Overland* with due modesty, and only on the promise of those of us who were writers to "turn in and help" him. There were not many writers of fiction in our ranks, and Harte and I confidently agreed that we would each write a short story for the first number of the new magazine. We had four months to prepare for the great event, but the first issue of the *The Overland* (July 1868) had only one story in its contents, and that was mine. Harte, with many sighs and groans, confessed that he had been unable to finish the first short story that he had

ever undertaken in his life. But he had composed a charming little poem for the first number. It was entitled "San Francisco from the Sea."*

'His own short story, when it did appear in the second number of the magazine (August 1868), was well worth waiting for. It was *The Luck of Roaring Camp*.'

The Luck of Roaring Camp proved the turning-point of its author's career, and, like

* 'Serene, indifferent of Fate,
Thou sittest at the Western Gate ;

Upon thy height, so lately won,
Still slant the banners of the sun ;

Thou seest the white seas strike their tents
O Warder of two Continents !

Oh, lion's whelp, that hidest fast
In jungle growth of spire and mast !

I know thy cunning and thy greed,
Thy hard high lust and wilful deed,

And all thy glory has to tell
Of specious gifts material.

Drop down, O Fleecy Fog, and hide
Her sceptic sneer and all her pride !

Wrap her, O Fog, in gown and hood
Of her Franciscan Brotherhood.

Hide me her faults, her sin and blame ;
With thy grey mantle cloak her shame !

most-turning points, it presented unexpected difficulties.

It had always been his ambition to become the founder of a peculiar, characteristic Western American literature, and he has confessed to his very early, half-boyish, but very enthusiastic, belief in such a possibility—a belief which never deserted him until he convinced the world that it had become a reality. But he had to fight against heavy odds. Prophets are not quickly accepted in

So shall she, cowled, sit and pray
Till morning bears her sins away.

Then rise, O Fleecy Fog, and raise
The glory of her coming days;

When Art shall raise and Culture lift
The sensual joys and meander thrift,

And all fulfilled the vision we
Who watch and wait shall never see,

Who in the morning of her race
Toiled fair or meanly in our place,

But, yielding to the common lot,
Lie unrecorded and forgot.'

Let it be remembered that when Bret Harte penned these ringing couplets he was living in San Francisco, and that it must have been a bold thing to speak thus fearlessly of his environment. He was soon to learn that he could not 'lie unrecorded and forgot.'

their own country, and the Californians of those days hungered for and greedily bought Eastern literature. 'The illustrated and satirical English journals,' he tells us, 'were as frequently seen in California as in Massachusetts, and he had often experienced more difficulty in procuring a copy of *Punch* in an English provincial town than at "Red Dog" or "One Horse Gulch." It was because "Home" was still potent with these voluntary exiles in their moments of relaxation'; and so the coming author had to fight that almost impregnable creature—the demon of prejudice.

Here it will be well to let Bret Harte speak for himself.

'When the first number of *The Overland Monthly* appeared,' he says, 'the author, then its editor, called the publisher's attention to the lack of any distinctive Californian romance in its pages, and averred that, should no other contribution come in, he himself would supply the

omission in the next number. No other contribution was offered, and the author, having the plot and general idea already in his mind, in a few days sent the manuscript of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* to the printer. He had not yet received the proof sheets when he was suddenly summoned to the office of the publisher, whom he found standing, the picture of dismay and anxiety, with the proof before him. The indignation and stupefaction of the author can well be understood when he was told that the printer, instead of returning the proofs to him, submitted them to the publisher, with the emphatic declaration that the matter thereof was so indecent, irreligious, and improper, that his proof-reader—a young lady—had with difficulty been induced to continue its perusal, and that he, as a friend of the publisher and a well-wisher of the magazine, was impelled to present to him personally this shameless evidence of the manner in which the editor was imperilling the future of that enterprise. It should be

premised that the critic was a man of character and standing, the head of a large printing establishment, a church member, and, the author thinks, a deacon. In which circumstances the publisher frankly admitted to the author that, while he could not agree with all the printer's criticisms, he thought the story open to grave objection, and its publication of doubtful expediency.

'Believing only that he was the victim of some extraordinary typographical blunder, the author at once sat down and read the proof. In its new dress, with the metamorphosis of type—that metamorphosis which every writer so well knows changes his relations to it and makes it no longer seem a part of himself—he was able to read it with something of the freshness of an untold tale. As he read on he found himself affected even as he had been affected in the conception and writing of it—a feeling so incompatible with the charges against it that he could only lay it down and declare emphatically, albeit hope-

lessly, that he could really see nothing objectionable in it. Other opinions were sought and given. To the author's surprise he found himself in the minority. Finally, the story was submitted to three gentlemen of culture and experience, friends of publisher and author, who were unable, however, to come to any clear decision. It was, however, suggested to the author that, assuming the natural hypothesis that his editorial reasoning might be warped by his literary predilections in a consideration of one of his own productions, a personal sacrifice would at this juncture be in the last degree heroic. This last suggestion had the effect of ending all further discussion; for he at once informed the publisher that the question of the propriety of the story was no longer at issue; the only question was of his capacity to exercise the proper editorial judgment; and that unless he was permitted to test that capacity by the publication of the story, and abide squarely by the result, he must resign his editorial

position. The publisher, possibly struck with the author's confidence, possibly from kindness of disposition to a younger man, yielded, and *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was published in the current number of the magazine for which it was written, as it was written, without emendation, omission, alteration, or apology. A no inconsiderable part of the grotesqueness of the situation was the feeling, which the author retained throughout the whole affair, of the perfect sincerity, good faith, and seriousness of his friend's—the printer's—objection, and for many days thereafter he was haunted by a consideration of the sufferings of this conscientious man, obliged to assist materially in disseminating the dangerous and subversive doctrines contained in this baleful fiction. What solemn protests must have been laid with the ink on the rollers and impressed upon those wicked sheets! what pious warnings must have been secretly folded and stitched in that number

of *The Overland Monthly*! Across the chasm of years and distance the author stretches forth the hand of sympathy and forgiveness, not forgetting the gentle proof-reader, that chaste and unknown nymph whose mantling cheeks and downcast eyes gave the first indications of warning.'

Mr Noah Brooks has recorded this strange incident as follows :—

‘Perhaps I may be pardoned,’ he says, ‘for a brief reference to an odd complication that arose while *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was being put into type in the printing office where *The Overland Monthly* was prepared for publication. A young lady who served as proof-reader in the establishment had been somewhat shocked by the scant morals of the mother of Luck, and when she came to the scene where Kentuck, after reverently fondling the infant, said, “he wrastled with my finger, the d—d little cuss,” the indignant proof-reader was ready to throw up her engagement rather than go

any further with a story so wicked and immoral. There was consternation throughout the establishment, and the head of the concern went to the office of the publisher with the virginal proof-reader's protest. Unluckily, Mr Roman was absent from the city. Harte, when notified of the obstacle raised in the way of *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, manfully insisted that the story must be printed as he wrote it, or not at all. Mr Roman's *locum tenens* in despair brought the objectionable manuscript around to my office and asked my advice. When I had read the sentence that had caused all this turmoil, having first listened to the tale of the much-bothered temporary publisher, I surprised him by a burst of laughter. It seemed to me incredible that such a tempest in a teacup could have been raised by Harte's bit of character sketching. But, recovering my gravity, I advised that the whole question should await Mr Roman's return. I was sure that he would never consent to any

“editing” of Harte’s story. This was agreed to, and when the publisher came back, a few days later, the embargo was removed. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was printed as it was written, and printing office and vestal proof-reader survived the shock.’

It is amazing to think that, but for the determination and self-confidence of quite a young author, a story that has gladdened and softened the hearts of thousands,—a story that has drawn welcome smiles and purifying tears from all who can appreciate its deftly-mingled humour and pathos,—a story that has been a boon to humanity — might have been sacrificed to the shallow ruling of a prudish ‘young-lady’ proof-reader, and a narrow-minded, pharisaical deacon-printer!

It is appalling to think what might have happened if through nervousness or modesty the writer had been frightened by the premature criticisms of this precious pair.

Clearly the world might have lost that noble series of stories written on the lines of *The Luck of Roaring Camp*,—stories of truth,—stories that have brightened our fancies, excited our compassions, and enlarged our knowledge of mankind. Truly Bret Harte did a good day's work for his fellow-creatures when he fearlessly stood by his *Luck*. But though his story was (thanks to his courage) published in the way he wished, and at the time he wished, its troubles were not over. It had obtained a public hearing, but, like its own hero, it was born with an evil reputation and to a community that had yet to learn to love it. The secular Press, with one or two exceptions, received it coolly, and referred to its 'singularity'; the religious Press frantically excommunicated it, and anathematised it as the offspring of evil; the high promise of *The Overland Monthly* was said to have been ruined by its birth; Christians were cautioned against pollution by its contact; practical business

men were gravely urged to condemn and frown upon this picture of Californian society that was not conducive to Eastern immigration; its hapless author was held up to obloquy as a man who had abused a sacred trust. But the *Luck* was not wholly dependent on its reception in California. Fortunately *The Overland Monthly* had in its first number secured a hearing and position throughout the American Union, and the author awaited the larger verdict. The publisher, albeit his worst fears were confirmed, was not a man to weakly regret a position he had once taken, and waited also. The return mail from the East brought a packet addressed to the 'Editor of *The Overland Monthly*,' enclosing a letter from the famous publishers, Fields, Osgood & Company, addressed to the—to them—unkown 'Author of *The Luck of Roaring Camp*,' asking for a story (upon the most flattering terms), written on the same lines, for their own widely-read periodical, *The Atlantic Monthly*.

The same mail brought newspapers and reviews welcoming the little foundling of Californian literature with an enthusiasm that (according to his own confession) half frightened the author; but with the placing of that letter in the hands of the publisher, who chanced to be standing by his side, and who during those dark days had, without the author's faith, sustained the author's position, he felt that his encouragement was full and complete. What followed was as natural as it was fortunate. The busy pen was soon at work again, and in the right direction. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was speedily followed by *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, *Miggles*, and *Tennessee's Partner*.

In connection with the last-named charming idyll I must quote a little story to prove how, in the days when (to use his own words) Bret Harte was 'a mere truant schoolboy,' he was, like a true artist, studying from the life.

The story of Tennessee and his partner was founded on the close friendship that existed between two men named Chaffee and Chamberlain. For years and years they lived their simple lives under the same roof-tree—sharing a common purse, and never having a dispute. Upon their lives, it is said, and of course with a great amount of added fancy, Bret Harte built his never-dying tale. In the story Chaffee was the simple but true-minded partner who loved Tennessee to the death. Though Tennessee stole his wedded wife, the partner, who always bore the relative name, forgave him, and, unsuccessfully, sought to ransom him at the cost of his all from Judge Lynch. Then, when all was over, the mourning partner, alone with his little donkey Jinny, cut down Tennessee's body, and in his rough cart, and a crude coffin half filled with bark and the tassels of pine, and further decorated with slips of willow and made fragrant with buck-

eye blossom, took his long-time comrade away to be buried in the fern-overgrown garden patch of the home he had wronged. Will anyone with the soul to understand it ever forget the exquisite pathos of the ending of that beautiful story? How Tennessee's partner, lifting his dying head from his pillow, said, 'It is time to go for Tennessee; I must put Jinny in the cart'; and would have 'arisen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy, "There now—steady, Jinny—steady, old girl. How dark it is! Look out for the ruts—and look out for him, too, old gal. Sometimes, you know, when he's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar! I told you so!—thar he is—coming this way, too, all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee! Pardner!" And so they met.'

And yet I have heard goody-goody,

would-be critics speak of this beautiful prose poem as—well, let me use the word ‘singular.’ Such people will always exist, and, most happily for humanity, Bret Harte does not appeal to them, but to the ‘great heart of the nation.’

The little story of which I have spoken has it that the foundation of *Tennessee's Partner* lay in the eloquent plea that Chaffee once made for his friend's life. It saved a neck from the Vigilance Committee, and turned the culprit over to the powers that be—and Chaffee's eloquence had won a boon never granted before or since in Tuolumne County, though many, many years elapsed before a little silver-haired man was told that he and his devoted friendship had been used to point a moral and adorn a tale.

Bret Harte's attentive readers know that he must have drawn from the life, and Jack Hamlin, Colonel Starbottle, Wan Lee, Gabriel Conroy, Flip, Mliss, Maruja,

Susy, and the rest of his noble pageant, are as much flesh and blood to us as Roderick Random, Wilkins Micawber, Sam Weller, Joseph Andrews, Dolly Varden, Elsie Venner, Ethel Newcome and Becky Sharp—just as are a hundred other characters who illuminate the pages of the fiction that will never die.

Speaking of these pen-and-ink life studies, he says, 'My stories are true not only in phenomena but in characters. I do not pretend to say that many of my characters existed exactly as they are described, but I believe there is not one of them who did not have a real human being as a suggesting and a starting-point. Some of them, indeed, had several. John Oakhurst, for instance, was drawn quite closely from life. On one occasion, however, when a story in which he figures was being discussed, a friend of mine said, "I know the original of Oakhurst—the man you took him from."

“ ‘Who?’ said I?

“ ‘Young L——’ ”

‘ I was astounded. As a matter of fact, the gambler as portrayed was as good a picture, even to the limp, of young L—— as of the actual original. The two men, you see, belonged to a class which had strongly-marked characteristics, and were generally alike in dress and manner.’

But Bret Harte did not only write poems and stories for *The Overland Monthly*. ‘ The editorial departments of the magazine,’ Mr Noah Brooks tells us, ‘ were the book reviews and the paragraphs under the head of “Etc.” at the back of each number. Harte and I wrote the notices of new books, he writing by far the greater part; and we used to strive good-naturedly for the privilege of reviewing books that were destined to be “scalped.” With the confidence of youth, it was easier for us to scalp a poor book than to do full justice

to a worthy one. As a book-scalper Harte greatly excelled. His satire was fine and keen. In the department of "Etc." he required no assistance. His comments on passing events were trenchant, witty and clever.'

How interesting it would be if, after this lapse of years, and in days when everything he writes is eagerly read, these waifs and strays could be collected and republished!

His next great sensation was that delicious satire in verse, *The Heathen Chinee*, which at once 'caught on' (as the slang, but not-to-be-misunderstood, phrase goes) in America and in England, and is as familiar with all classes at the present time as it was in those far-off days when its first publication excited admiration and delight. Its enormous popularity was not anticipated by its author, who kept it for a long time in his desk before he could

make up his mind to issue it. To suit his fastidious taste it was always being altered and stippled up.

It was suggested by a curious state of things that appealed to the humorous eye, and was intended to serve, in a jocose way, a practical purpose without any thought of anything save its local effect.

The Chinese were at that time invading California in large numbers, imitating the Caucasian in all things, and, being patient and frugal, doing remarkably well. Following the example set them by their superiors, they mined with great dexterity and success, and took to cheating at cards quite seriously as a valuable addition to the game. Although until they arrived in California they knew nothing of the card games played there, they cheated quite admirably, but, instead of winning praises for their ingenuity, found themselves, when detected,

abused, and occasionally mobbed by their teachers in a way that had not been dreamt of in their philosophy.

It was this that suggested the verses that were, to the author's astonishment, to be the talk of the land. Soon after *The Heathen Chinee* appeared, a single new firm in New York was taking twelve hundred copies of each number of *The Overland Monthly*.

The ordinary reader of *The Heathen Chinee*, while riveted by the aptness and flow of the rhythm, would hardly suspect that the metre has a Greek source, and that this was discovered by one of our English poets. Being challenged on the point by this authority, Bret Harte laughingly confessed that it was suggested by the threnody in Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*, and it whimsically occurred to him that the grand and beautiful sweep of that chorus was just the kind of thing

which Truthful James would be the last man in the world to adopt in expressing his views. For this quaint reason the metre was used.

Before taking leave of these early and fascinating Californian days, I must once more quote Bret Harte:—

‘A few words,’ he writes, ‘regarding the peculiar conditions of life and society that are here rudely sketched and often but barely outlined. The author is aware that, partly from a habit of thought and expression, partly from the exigencies of brevity, in his narratives, and partly from the habit of addressing an audience familiar with the local scenery, he often assumes, as premises already granted by the reader, the existence of a peculiar and romantic state of civilisation, the like of which few English readers are inclined to accept without corroborative facts and figures. These he could only give by referring to

the ephemeral records of Californian journals of that date, and the testimony of far-scattered witnesses, survivors of the exodus of 1849. He must beg the reader to bear in mind that this emigration was either across a continent almost unexplored, or by the way of a long and dangerous voyage around Cape Horn, and that the promised land itself presented the singular spectacle of a patriarchal Latin race who had been left to themselves, forgotten by the world, for nearly three hundred years. The faith, courage, vigour, youth and capacity for adventure necessary to this emigration produced a body of men as strongly distinctive as the companions of Jason. Unlike most pioneers, the majority were men of profession and education; all were young, and all had staked their future in the enterprise. Critics who have taken large and exhaustive views of mankind and society from club windows in

Pall Mall or the Fifth Avenue can only accept for granted the turbulent chivalry that thronged the streets of San Francisco in the gala days of her youth, and must read the blazon of their deeds like the doubtful quarterings of the shield of Amadis de Gaul. The author has been frequently asked if such and such incidents were real; if he had ever met such-and-such characters? To this he must return the one answer, that in only a single instance was he conscious of drawing purely from his imagination and fancy for a character and a logical succession of incidents drawn therefrom. A few weeks after his story was published, he received a letter, authentically signed, *correcting some of the minor details of his facts*, and enclosing as corroborative evidence a slip from an old newspaper, wherein the main incident of his supposed fanciful creation was recorded with a largeness of statement that far transcended his powers of

imagination. He has been repeatedly cautioned, kindly and unkindly, intelligently and unintelligently, against his alleged tendency to confuse recognised standards of morality by extenuating lives of recklessness, and often criminality, with a single solitary virtue. He might easily show that he has never written a sermon, that he has never moralised or commented upon the actions of his heroes, that he has never voiced a creed or obtrusively demonstrated an ethical opinion. He might easily allege that this merciful effect of his art arose from the reader's weak human sympathy, and hold himself irresponsible. But he would be conscious of a more miserable weakness in thus divorcing himself from his fellow-men, who, in the domain of art, must ever walk hand in hand with him. So he prefers to say, that of all the various forms in which *Cant* presents itself to suffering humanity, he knows of none so outrageous, so il-

logical, so undemonstrable, so marvellously absurd, as the Cant of "Too Much Mercy." When it shall be proven to him that communities are degraded and brought to guilt and crime, suffering or destitution, from a predominance of this quality; when he shall see pardoned ticket-of-leave men elbowing men of austere lives out of situation and position, and the repentant Magdalen supplanting the blameless virgin in society, then he will lay aside his pen and extend his hand to the new Draconian discipline in fiction. But until then he will, without claiming to be a religious man or a moralist, but simply as an artist, reverently and humbly conform to the rules laid down by a Great Poet who created the parable of "The Prodigal Son" and the "Good Samaritan," whose works have lasted eighteen hundred years, and will remain when the present writer and his generation are forgotten.'

I venture to think that the works of

Bret Harte will never be forgotten, and that his name will always figure amongst the 'immortals'; and that *because* of the 'Too Much Mercy' for which 'the narrow-minded' have pitifully attempted to condemn him, which, in the words I have just quoted, he has so nobly defended, and which has brought comfort, encouragement and hope to thousands of conscience-stricken and anxiously-beating hearts. When human nature, as we understand it to-day, ceases to be human nature, the virtue may evaporate from his writings. Until then its fragrance will remain imperishable.

In face of his great successes it was hardly likely that he could turn a deaf ear to the tempting offers that were now at his beck and call, and in 1871—resigning his editorship of *The Overland Monthly*, and the Professorship of Literature in the University of California to which he had recently been appointed, and which was a bright feather in his cap—the Argonaut

of 1856 travelled from West to East bearing with him a Golden Fleece of his own creation, a unique and priceless trophy, undreamt of in the days when he set forth to seek his fortune.

CHAPTER III

HOW AND WHEN THE CONDENSED NOVELS WERE WRITTEN

THE famous series of *Condensed Novels* belong to the Californian period of Bret Harte's career, and demand a chapter to themselves. They originally appeared in *The San Francisco Californian*, and together with a number of local sketches, entitled *Bohemian Papers*, formed the author's first published volume in prose. This appeared in 1867. The 'novels' must have been written in a season of exuberant high spirits, and it is pleasant to hear Bret Harte laugh over them to-day, his merriment being always mingled with admiration for the best points in the authors he has so whimsically and so good-naturedly

parodied. Indeed, I know of no more appreciative reader of the fiction of other writers than he, and his wonderfully retentive memory enables him to quote from them at will.

Of course similar travesties have been written before and since. The immortal Thackeray has bequeathed to us (and to those who can appreciate it a right valuable legacy it is) *George de Barnwell, by Sir E. L. B. L., Bart*; *Codlinsby, by D. Shrewsberry, Esq.*; *Phil Fogarty, a Tale of the Fighting Onety-Oneth*, by Harry Rollicker; and three or four other resplendent sketches. They are instinct with humour, and dissect their subjects to a nicety; but the great satirist is as usual scathing.

The mirth-provoking F. C. Burnard has given us a sheaf of delightful parodies; and he who cannot enjoy the wild humour of such a skit on Ouida's *Strathmore* as that entitled *Strapmore* is indeed to be pitied. It seems to be the practice of

this fascinating writer to let his merriment run away with him, and, to the intense joy of his readers, to put no restraint upon it until he has to pause for want of space.

But in dealing with this class of work Bret Harte has not only been more exhaustive but, while never checking his over-brimming sense of fun, more analytical than his literary brethren. In the *Condensed Novels* one finds the same delicacy of truth, the same minuteness in details that run through all his writings and make perfect their charm. It has been said of Geoffrey Chaucer that his every character is a perfect study, drawn from the life with a free but careful hand, in effect broad and brilliant in colour, but painted with a minuteness of touch and a careful finish that reminds the present-day reader strongly of the elaborate pencilling of our pre-Raphaelite artists, whose every ivy leaf and straw is a perfect picture. Precisely

the same criticism applies to the works of Bret Harte.

And now for a refreshing plunge into the *Condensed Novels*.

Of course they can only be really appreciated by those who are familiar with the authors who are held up, not to ridicule, but to good-humoured banter. When deftly handled, the jester's bladder-thonged whip, though it seems to make a great to-do, never really hurts. It is to be feared, however, that James Fennimore Cooper, Captain Marryat, Bulwer Lytton, Charles Reade, and other famous novelists who delighted a bygone generation, are not much read to-day. 'Tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity; and pity 'tis 'tis true.' On the other hand, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Miss Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood, Charlotte Brontë, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and others who have been the subjects of his gently-applied satire, are always with us—or, at all events, with

some of us. Though he loves their works, it is noticeable that Bret Harte did not parody either Sir Walter Scott or George Eliot, and Thackeray (as we shall presently see) is only touched incidentally. Smollett and Fielding were left outside his scheme. Probably in the 'sixties' their 'coarseness' was deemed to be prohibitive. In the 'nineties,' both in the novel and on the stage, we have prurient suggestion that puts the mere coarseness of a bygone and outspoken age into the background. To many minds the bare roughness of these past masters of their art is less noxious than the half-draped insinuations of some of the writers of to-day.

One can imagine with what gusto Bret Harte, following the manner of James Fennimore Cooper, wrote the following description of Judge Tompkins in his Californian home :—

'Although the cottage was humble and unpretentious, and in keeping with the

wildness of the landscape, its interior gave evidence of the cultivation and refinements of its inmates ; an aquarium, containing gold fishes, stood on a marble centre-table at one end of the apartment, while a magnificent grand piano occupied the other. The floor was covered with a yielding tapestry carpet, and the walls were adorned with paintings from the pencils of Van Dyke, Rubens, Tintoretto, Michael Angelo, and the productions of the more modern Turner, Kensett, Church and Bierstadt. Although Judge Tompkins had chosen the frontiers of civilisation as his home, it was impossible for him to entirely forego the habits and tastes of his former life. He was seated in a luxurious armchair, writing at a mahogany *escriatoire*, while his daughter, a lovely young girl of seventeen summers, plied her crotchet-needle on an ottoman beside him.'

The fire splutters, and the Judge says to his child, 'Geneva, the logs which compose yonder fire seem to have been in-

cautiously chosen. The sibilation produced by the sap, which exudes copiously therefrom, is not conducive to composition.'

To which the beautiful Geneva Octavia Tompkins, 'dressed in a white *moire antique* robe trimmed with *tulle*,' replies, 'True, father, but I thought it would be preferable to the constant crepitation which is apt to attend the combustion of more seasoned ligneous fragments.'

Then Muck-a-Muck, the Indian chieftain, appears, and 'it needed but a glance at the new-comer to detect at once the form and features of the haughty aborigine—the untaught and untrammelled son of the forest. Over one shoulder a blanket, negligently but gracefully thrown, disclosed a bare and powerful breast, decorated with a quantity of three-cent postage-stamps, which he had despoiled from an overland mail stage a few weeks previous. A cast-off beaver of Judge Tompkin's, adorned by a single feather covered his erect head, from which

his straight locks descended. His right hand hung lightly by his side, while his left was engaged in holding on a pair of pantaloons, which the lawless grace and freedom of his lower limbs evidently could not brook.'

Of course all this is burlesque,—but what good and hearty burlesque.

The greatest admirers of the author could have a good-humoured laugh over it without feeling that their idol was in any way affronted, and in his day Cooper was one of the most popular of novelists. Balzac, we are told, admired him greatly, but with discrimination; Victor Hugo pronounced him greater than the great master of modern romance, and this verdict was echoed by a multitude of inferior readers, who were satisfied with no title for their favourite less than that of 'The American Scott.' Personally I am truly sorry for the English boys of to-day who do not give themselves the chance of revelling in the

famous *Leatherstocking* series of stories, and, more especially, in the fascinating *Last of the Mohicans*. And to those who are blessed with a sense of fun 'Muck-a-Muck' gives a new spice to the old romances.

Selina Sedilia, after the manner of Miss Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood (for his merry jaunt with them the satirist puts these two clever ladies into double harness), is splendid fooling. Who does not recognise the style that has made their thrilling stories appeal to the million? As thus:—'The sun was setting over Sloperton Grange and reddened the window of the lonely chamber in the western tower, supposed to be haunted by Sir Edward Sedilia, the founder of the Grange. In the dreamy distance arose the gilded mausoleum of Lady Felicia Sedilia, who haunted that portion of Sedilia Manor known as "Stiff-uns Acre." A little to the left of the Grange might have been seen a mouldering ruin known as

“Guy’s Keep,” haunted by the spirit of Sir Guy Sedilia, who was found, one morning, crushed by one of the fallen battlements. Yet, as the setting sun gilded these objects, a beautiful and almost holy calm seemed diffused about the Grange.’

Then we learn how the Lady Selina Sedilia, seated ‘by an oriel window overlooking the park,’ is greeted by her fervent and fearless lover Edgardo, who, nothing daunted by having passed the ‘ghost of her aunt in the carriage drive, or a glimpse of the spectre of her uncle in the ruined keep, or meeting with the familiar features of the spirit of her grandfather at his usual post, has come once more to turn his dark, liquid orbs fondly upon the ingenuous face of his betrothed.’

There is a soul stirring - love-scene between the impassioned pair, the day of their wedding is fixed, and then, when she is left alone, Lady Selina wonders what he would think if he knew that she has another

husband living; that she is the mother of two legitimate and three natural children; that at the age of seven she poisoned her sister by putting verdigris into her cream tarts; that she threw her cousin from a swing at the age of twelve; and that the lady's maid who incurred the displeasure of her girlhood lies at the bottom of the horsepond. But, after a brief mental struggle, causing her whole body to writhe as she rocks to and fro in a paroxysm of grief, she indiscreetly decides that her Edgardo is 'too pure,—too good,—too innocent,—to hear such improper conversation.' And so, in order to maintain a lady-like secrecy, she résolves on new and unheard-of crimes, when suddenly her first husband, Burke the Slogger, a criminal of the deepest dye, appears upon the scene. In this fashion the wild piece of well and truly burlesqued 'sensation' goes on, until 'five more ghosts are added to the supernatural population of Sloperton Grange.'

Asked not very long ago to give the name of the most perfect romantic novel he had read, Bret Harte unhesitatingly voted for *Monte Christo*, and, indeed, he is never tired of praising the construction, style and absorbing interest of that enduring work. In common with all appreciative readers, he loves his Dumas, and knows him so well that he can get a good-natured laugh out of his methods. *The Ninety-nine Guardsmen* is a diverting hit at *The Three Musketeers* and its sequel, *Twenty Years After*, and he brings us into the closest intimacy with the redoubtable sons of Gascony, when the gigantic innkeeper of Provins, after noticing a cloud of dust on the roadway, turns to his wife, Dame Perigord, saying,—

““St Denis! make haste and spread the cloth. Add a bottle of Charlevoix to the table. This traveller, who rides so hard by his pace, must be a monseigneur.””

‘Truly, the traveller, clad in the uniform of a musketeer, as he drew up to the door of the hostelry, did not seem to have spared his horse. Throwing his reins to the landlord, he leaped lightly to the ground. He was a young man of four-and-twenty, and spoke with a slight Gascon accent.

““I am hungry, *morbleu*! I wish to dine!”

‘The gigantic innkeeper bowed, and led the way to a neat apartment where a table stood covered with tempting viands. The musketeer at once set to work. Fowls, fish and pâtés disappeared before him. Perigord sighed as he witnessed the devastations. Only once the stranger paused.

““Wine!” Perigord brought wine. The stranger drank a dozen bottles. Finally he rose to depart. Turning to the expectant landlord, he said,

““Charge it!”

““To whom, your highness?” said Perigord, anxiously.

“To His Eminence!”

“Mazarin!” ejaculated the innkeeper.

“The same. Bring me my horse,” and the musketeer, remounting his favourite animal, rode away.

The innkeeper slowly turned into the inn. Scarcely had he reached the courtyard before the clatter of hoofs again called him to the doorway. A young musketeer of a light and graceful figure rode up.

“*Parbleu!* my dear Perigord, I am famishing. What have you got for dinner?”

“Venison, capons, larks and pigeons, your excellency,” replied the obsequious landlord, bowing to the ground.

“Enough!” The young musketeer dismounted and entered the inn. Seating himself at the table replenished by the careful Perigord, he speedily swept it as clean as the first comer.

“Some wine, my brave Perigord,” said

the graceful young musketeer, as soon as he could find utterance.

‘Perigord brought three dozen of Charlevoix. The young man emptied them almost at a draught.

““By-by, Perigord,” he said lightly, waving his hand, as, preceding the astonished landlord, he slowly withdrew.

““But, your highness, the bill,” said the astounded Perigord.

““Ah! the bill. Charge it!”

““To whom?”

““The Queen!”

““What! Madame?”

““The same. Adieu, my good Perigord.”’

Of course, following these redoubtable two, comes the equally dauntless ‘number three,’ and he, too, demands and consumes refreshments, suggesting, when ‘another fowl’ is not forthcoming, ‘another flitch of bacon’ would be acceptable. He has to fall back upon wine.

‘The landlord brought one hundred and forty-four bottles. The courtier drank them all. “One may drink if one cannot eat,” said the aristocratic stranger, good-humouredly.

‘The innkeeper shuddered.

‘The guest rose to depart. The innkeeper came slowly forward with his bill, to which he had covertly added the losses which he had suffered from the previous strangers.

‘“Ah, the bill. Charge it!”

‘“Charge it! To whom?”

‘“To the King,” said the guest.

‘“What! His Majesty?”

‘“Certainly. Farewell, Perigord.”

‘The innkeeper groaned. Then he went out and took down his sign. Then remarked to his wife,—

‘“I am a plain man, and don’t understand politics. It seems, however, that the country is in a troubled state. Between His Eminence the Cardinal, His Majesty

the King, and Her Majesty the Queen,
I am a ruined man."

"Stay," said Dame Perigord, "I have
an idea."

"And that is—?"

"Become yourself a musketeer."

And so the jocund yet subtle travesty
runs on through the intrigues in which
the famous Athos, Porthos, Aramis and
D'Artagnan figure, until the King of
France says thoughtfully,—

"You teach me a lesson. You are
devoted and noble young gentlemen, but
your only weakness is your excessive
modesty. From this moment I make
you all marshals and dukes, with the
exception of Aramis."

"And me, sire?" said Aramis.

"You shall be an archbishop!"

The four friends looked up, and then
rushed into each other's arms. The King

embraced Louise de la Vallière, by way of keeping them company. A pause ensued. At last Athos spoke. "Swear, my children, that, next to yourselves, you will respect the King of France, and remember that 'forty years after' we will meet again."

Judging from the way in which they have recently reasserted themselves on our stages and in our circulating libraries, it seems more than likely that coming generations will meet Dumas' dashing musketeers for many a 'forty years' to come.

Perhaps the gem of the condensed novels is *Miss Mix*, in which the satirist absolutely revels in the opportunities given him by Charlotte Brontë in her powerful yet weird story, *Jane Eyre*.

The ring of the following lines shows how exactly he caught and daintily travesties her methods.

‘My earliest impressions are of a huge, misshapen rock, against which the hoarse waves beat unceasingly. On this rock three pelicans are standing in a defiant attitude. A dark sky lowers in the background, while two seagulls and a gigantic cormorant eye with extreme disfavour the floating corpse of a drowned woman in the foreground. A few bracelets, coral necklaces, and other articles of jewellery, scattered around loosely, complete this remarkable picture. It is one which, in some vague, unconscious way, symbolises, to my fancy, the character of a Man. I have never been able to explain exactly why. I think I must have seen the picture in some illustrated volume when a baby, or my mother may have dreamed it before I was born.

‘As a child I was not handsome. When I consulted the triangular bit of looking-glass which I always carried with me, it showed a pale, sandy and freckled face,

shaded by locks like the colour of seaweed when the sun strikes it in deep water. My eyes were said to be indistinctive; they were a faint, ashen gray; but above them rose—my only beauty—a high, massive, dome-like forehead, with polished temples, like door knobs of the purest porcelain.'

And then this remarkable young lady engages herself as governess in what appears to be the grimly-haunted home of Mr Rochester (here called Mr Rawjester), and with becoming calmness notices how, on their first interview, while she watches him with 'some interest,' he 'absently tied the poker into hard knots with his nervous fingers.' Neither does the well-bred and self-contained 'Miss Mix' evince the least surprise when Mr Rawjester leaps through a window, stands like a statue in a pelting storm, and returns by way of the hall chimney. And this although she 'saw

from the way that he wiped his feet on my dress that he had again forgotten my presence.'

But the appetising jest must be feasted upon and digested before it can be truly enjoyed. The curious charm of it is that while we are carried away by the wild fun of the thing we do not lose our admiration for the work of Charlotte Brontë. Bret Harte knew exactly how to fit his heads with caps, but they were silken in texture, and soft to the brow of the wearer.

Those who are familiar with the stimulating seafaring stories of Captain Marryat (it is to be feared that they are not enjoyed by the English lads of to-day as they were thirty or forty years ago) will revel in the 'topsey-turvey' and extravagant adventures of the happily-named 'Mr Midshipman Breezy.' Talking with the writer of this bright piece of nonsense, I was amazed to find how familiar he is

with the works of a man who, with a captivating method that was all his own, revarnished the 'Wooden Walls of Old England.'

That as an English boy, who once had the passing wish of every English boy to do daring deeds at sea (and who was very fortunately for himself kept on land), it was natural that I should have my early-read Marryat pretty well by heart, but I was amazed to find that Bret Harte, who must have read the books in the old Californian days, and without their close English associations, was equally familiar with them. From *Peter Simple* we passed on to *Percival Keene*, and thence through the whole series of delightful volumes until we came to the famous story of *Snarleyyow!* Then I found that he knew all the rollicking songs of the crew of the cutter *Yungfrau*, and he revelled in recalling how—

'Jack's alive and a merry dog,
When he gets on shore,
He calls for his glass of grog,
He drinks and he calls for more—'

how when a frigate was made to sail in a snowstorm on a Christmas Day, the seaman's wife, Poll, leaned against the sentry's box at the landing-place—

' And Bet and Sue
Both stood there too
A-shivering by her side,
They both were dumb,
And both looked glum,
As they watched the ebbing tide.
Poll put her arms a-kimbo,
At the admiral's house looked she ;
To thoughts before in limbo
She now a vent gave free,
" You have sent the ship in a gale to work
On a lee shore to be jammed,
I'll give you a piece of my mind, old Turk,
Port Admiral, you be d——d."'

how Jemmy Ducks trolls forth that—

‘Twas on the twenty-fourth of June I sailed away to sea.

I turned my pockets in the lap of Susan on my knee.
Says I, “my dear, ‘tis all I have, I wish that it was more,”
“It can’t be helped,” says Susan then, “you know we’ve spent galore.

You know we’ve spent galore, my Bill,
And merry have been we,
Again you must your pockets fill for Susan on your knee.”

Truly the young Argonaut of 1856 must early have turned his appreciative eye and retentive memory to our mother country!

And so, amongst others, this analytical humorist playfully deals with the methods of Victor Hugo, Lord Lytton, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade and Lord Beaconsfield. Of course I cannot deal exhaustively with all the condensed novels, but the following lines gently travestyng the style of the author of *Lothair* cannot be omitted.

‘This simple yet first-class conversation existed in the morning-room of Plusham,

where the mistress (the Duchess) of the palatial mansion sat involved in the sacred privacy of a circle of her married daughters. One dexterously applied golden knitting-needles to the fabrication of a purse of floss silk of the rarest texture, which none who knew the almost fabulous wealth of the Duke would believe was ever destined to hold in its silken meshes a less sum than £1,000,000; another adorned a slipper exclusively with seed pearls; a third emblazoned a page with rare pigments and the finest quality of gold leaf. Beautiful forms leaned over frames glowing with embroidery, and beautiful frames leaned over forms inlaid with mother-o'-pearl. Others, more remote, occasionally burst into melody as they tried the passages of a new and exclusive air given to them in MS. by some titled and devoted friend, for the private use of the aristocracy alone, and absolutely prohibited for publication.'

How delighted Bret Harte would be if some writer could, in all good-humour, mimic his methods in this inimitable fashion!

I cannot conclude this brief chapter without allusion to his gentle jest on the style of Charles Dickens, made doubly valuable by the tender reference to Thackeray—two of his best-beloved English authors. Most adroitly he pictures Dickens in his own character of ‘The Haunted Man’ (the feature of his Christmas story of 1848) and represents him as tormented by his own ghost:—

‘He sat alone in a gloomy library listening to the wind that roared in the chimney. Around him novels and story-books were strewn thickly; in his lap he held one with its pages freshly cut, and turned the leaves wearily until his eyes rested upon a portrait in its frontispiece. And as the wind howled the

more fiercely, and the darkness without fell blacker, a strange and fateful likeness to that portrait appeared behind his chair, and leaned upon his shoulder. The Haunted Man gazed at the portrait and sighed. The figure gazed at the portrait and sighed too.'

There can be no doubt that the 'freshly cut' book referred to was *Our Mutual Friend*, the last complete novel of Charles Dickens, published in 1865.

"Here again?" said the Haunted Man.

"Here again," the figure repeated in a low voice.

"Another novel?"

"Another novel."

"The old story?"

"The old story."

"I see a child," said the Haunted Man, gazing from the pages of the book into the fire, "a most unnatural child, a model

infant. It is prematurely old and philosophic. It dies in poverty to slow music. It dies surrounded by luxury to slow music. It dies with an accompaniment of golden water and rattling carts to slow music. Previous to its decease it makes a will; it repeats the Lord's Prayer, it kisses the 'boofe lady.' That child—"

" "Is mine," said the phantom.

" "I see a good woman undersized. I see several charming women, but they are all undersized. They are more or less imbecile and idiotic, but always fascinating and undersized. They wear coquettish caps and aprons. I observe that feminine virtue is invariably below the medium height, and that it is always simple and infantine. These women—"

" "Are mine."

" "I see a haughty, proud and wicked lady. She is tall and queenly. I remark that all proud and wicked women are tall and queenly. That woman—"

““Is mine,” said the phantom, wringing his hands.’

And so the exquisite banter goes on while the Haunted Man is, Scrooge-like, taken out by the spirits and is shown visions of the creations of Sir Walter Scott, Charles Lever, Captain Marryat, James Fennimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne and the rest of a goodly company, until, in response to a wave of the spirit’s hand, they stop before a quaint mansion of red brick. The Haunted Man says,—

““I see a gay drawing-room. I see my old friends of the club, of the college, of society, even as they lived and moved. I see the gallant and unselfish men whom I have loved, and the snobs whom I have hated. I see strangely mingling with them, and now and then blending with their forms, our old friends Dick Steele, Addison and Congreve. I observe, though, that these

gentlemen have a habit of getting too much in the way. The royal standard of Queen Anne, not in itself a beautiful ornament, is rather too prominent in the picture. The long galleries of black oak, the formal furniture, the old portraits, are picturesque but depressing. The house is damp. I enjoy myself better here on the lawn, where they are getting up a *Vanity Fair*. See, the bell rings, the curtain is rising, the puppets are brought out for a new play. Let me see."

‘The Haunted Man was pressing forward in his eagerness, but the hand of the Goblin stayed him, and pointing to his feet, he saw, between him and the rising curtain, a new-made grave. And bending above the grave in passionate grief the Haunted Man beheld the phantom of the previous night.’

Very charming is this half humorous yet truly tender tribute to Thackeray,— who, it will be remembered died in 1863,—

not long before the appearance of the first monthly numbers of *Our Mutual Friend*.

Bret Harte should certainly be urged to give us a further series of condensed novels. I know that he reads and appreciates the works of all the good novelists of to-day, and I am convinced that no man or woman amongst them would object to his playful satire.

Indeed, considering the great names of those who have 'gone before,' they might be well complimented by being 'added to the list.'

Note.—Since writing this I gladly learn that Bret Harte means to add to his 'condensed' gallery, and already is contemplating such notable writers of fiction as Marie Corelli, Anthony Hope, Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling.

CHAPTER IV

HOW HE CAME TO LONDON

CHARLES DICKENS's prophecy of course came true, and in 1878 or 1879 Bret Harte came to London. The popularity of his works amongst every class of English readers was then firmly established, enthusiasm regarding them ran high, and 'all sorts and conditions of men' were eager to bid him cordial welcome. Had he desired it he might have been the lion of more than one London season, but Bret Harte never courted the society of Mrs Leo Hunter, and while he no doubt appreciated the marked attentions that were paid him, he did not seek more publicity than that which

was inevitably thrust upon him. What he did was by the charm of his conversation and manner to delight all who were privileged to meet him, and to establish many life-long friendships. I think I am right when I say that he prefers a small circle of true friends to a great round of mere acquaintances, and the quiet companionship of congenial souls to the well-meant demonstrations of public functions. His hearty reception from the leading literary men of the day must have been peculiarly gratifying to him. In connection with them I could here mention many famous names—but that would be far from his wish. Suffice it to say that wherever he went his courtesy and ready flow of fascinating talk won their way, and that the man soon became as popular as his books.

Happily he was induced to lecture, not only in London, but in the principal provincial cities and towns. His success

was immediate, and, had he wished it, might have been indefinitely prolonged. How he held his audiences, as, with a style that was at once easy and convincing, and a voice that could drop from humour to pathos, he told us the story that we all wanted to hear from his lips,—the story of 'The Argonauts of 1849.'

He prefaced it by saying that it was not a pretty story; it was not perhaps an instructive story; it was the story of a life of which perhaps the best that could be said was that it no longer existed. But, as he went on, his hearers found it an all-absorbing story. He commenced by giving a graphic picture of the country that his well-named 'Argonauts' inhabited, and of the civilisation which they placed. For more than three hundred years, he told us, California was of all Christian countries the least known,—indeed, he declared an old English map existed in which it was set down as an island. Yet

those were tranquil days for California, for the old rancheros lived in a patriarchal style, sleeping and smoking the half-years of sunshine away, and believing they had discovered a new Spain. They awoke from the dream only to find themselves foreigners on their own soil, strangers in their own country.

A social and political earthquake, he told us, more powerful than any they had ever known, shook the foundation of the land, and the treasure of the land, of the existence of which they had been ignorant, suddenly glittered before their eyes. They were sceptical even of the existence of this Golden Fleece until they saw it, and awaited their fate with a kind of heathen philosophy, whatever it might bring. The real pioneers to this new region were the oldest and youngest of religions known, for though this change came suddenly upon the inhabitants it had been prefigured by a chain of circumstances whose logical links future

historians should not overlook. Did Americans ever reflect, he asked, that they held this right to California from the old Catholic Church, and to the Mormon Brotherhood? Yet it was a Catholic priest and Brigham Young, who led his half-famished legions to Salt Lake City, who were the two great pioneers of the Argonauts of 1849. Then he pointed out that with the new-comers, if the special training of years failed to procure pecuniary recognition, an idle accomplishment, sometimes a mere physical peculiarity, succeeded.

It was this wonderful adaptability that mitigated their dangers or helped them to success. And then he made us laugh by saying that of the character of these people he would prefer to defer criticism until he could add to calmness the safe distance of the historian.

There were men, he assured us, who had left families, creditors, and even officers of justice, perplexed and lamenting. There

were husbands who had deserted their wives, and in some extreme cases the wives of others. Some of the best men had the worst antecedents—some of the worst rejoiced in a spotless puritanical pedigree. Such was the character of the men who gave the dominant tone and picturesque colouring to the life of that period. He would not deny that there was a class distinct in morals, but they had no place save as a background to the deeply-shaded figures of the Argonauts.

Then he powerfully sketched a picture of the people gathered in 'their city by the sea,' the surroundings of which during the memorable winter of 1852 he graphically described. Very vivid were his word-paintings of the gambling saloons, always the central point of interest in San Francisco. There were four of them — the largest public buildings in the city—thronged and crowded every night. Yet, strange to say, there was a quaint decorum about them,

and they were the quietest haunts in San Francisco. There was no drunkenness, no exultation, and, in fact, no excitement. Business men, who had gambled all day long in their legitimate employment, found nothing to excite them in a game at cards. One night a man whilst playing fell down dead, and a doctor pronounced that he had died from a diseased heart.

The Coroner of San Francisco, who was playing at the same table, immediately empanelled a jury from the rest of the players, who returned a verdict in accordance with the facts, and the game went on. Among the many droll stories that he told us was one illustrative of the affection in which a miner usually held his partner in a claim. A San Francisco stranger had been indulging in some free criticism on religious matters, and he was soon seen lying on the ground with an angry Kentuckian above him gripping his

revolver. The crowd interfered and separated them, and then the aggrieved miner, pocketing his weapon, calmly said, 'I have nothing against the man, only that he's been saying something about Quakers, and I'll let him know that my partner is a Quaker, and a man of peace.'

As an instance of their utter disregard of sentimentality he related the following weird tale. One of the most terrible crimes that could be committed amongst these people was horse-stealing, for in the early days an Argonaut was greatly dependent upon his horse. Lynch law punished horse-stealing with death, and a man being arrested for the offence, a jury, without hearing the evidence, at once retired to agree upon the verdict. On one occasion, perhaps from insufficient proof or motives of humanity, perhaps because the census returns were beginning to show an alarming decrease in the male population, the jury

for once in a way showed strange signs of hesitation, and a curious leaning towards mercy. At that time an anxious man put his head into the room, and asked them if they had 'brought it in'? When they said 'no,' he replied, 'Take your time—but remember we're waitin' for this yer room to lay out the corpse in.'

Their slang, he explained to us, was not the mere cues and catchwords of an older civilisation, but an epigrammatic way of stating some fact or fancy. A man was reproved by a young woman, just returned from a camp meeting, for swearing,—and his reply was, 'Call that swearing—why, you ought to hear Bill Jones exhorting the impenitent mule.'

Although he was not an Argonaut, the very name of the 'Heathen Chinee' of course caused abundant delight, and we learned how he brought unto the Argonauts new life. Quiet, calm, almost philosophical, but never obtrusive or aggressive, he never

flaunted his three thousand years of history in the faces of the men of the day, neither did he obtrude that exclusive mythology of his before men who were sceptical of even one God. He accepted at once a menial position with humility, washed for the whole country, and made cleanliness an accessible virtue in Upper California. He worshipped the devil in the household with a sincerity that shamed the feeble efforts of others in that direction. He took his regular beating calmly, and was robbed and even murdered with stoical fortitude. But he was sometimes able to get even with the Christian Argonauts. He had an innocent way of defrauding the Custom-house officers, utilising the seats of chairs and his coat sleeves for the surreptitious storing of opium, and evading poll-tax. Perhaps his most successful attempt at balancing his accounts with a Christian civilisation was his career as a physician.

One charmingly ingenious deception prac-

tised by a Celestial upon the intelligent Christians was the subject of a good story.

The 'Heathen Chinee' in question set up as a physician, and his confederates industriously proclaimed the miracles which he had performed, although he professed to cure tubercular consumption with green tea, and aneurism with ginger. When the fraud was suddenly exposed the Celestial star began to wane, and the doctor returned to his native rice and naïve simplicity with half a million dollars.

The beautiful peroration, which runs as follows, will never be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to appreciate the stirring eloquence with which it was delivered :—

'And with this receding figure bringing up the rear of the procession I close my review of the Argonauts of 1849. In the rank and file there may be many personally known to some of this audience; there may

be gaps which the memory of others may fill. There are homes all over the world whose vacant places never can be filled; there are graves all over California on whose nameless mounds no one shall ever weep. I have told you it is not a pretty story. I should like to end it with the usual flourish of trumpets, but the band has gone on before, and the dust of the highway is beginning to hide the Argonauts from our view. They are marching on to the city by the sea, to that loadstone hill which you remember Sinbad saw, but which they call their "lone mountain." There, waiting at its base, lies the "Argo," and when the last Argonaut shall have passed in, she will spread her white wings and slip away unnoticed through the golden gate that opens and beckons in the distance.'

Yes, very delightful were those evenings spent with Bret Harte,—the man who had enchanted us with his published works,—

the man we all wanted to see. We would not have him miss a moment from his desk, and yet it is to be wished that he would leave it now and then and talk to us again. In the case of the unique thing he gave us, the somewhat awe-inspiring word 'lecture' seems out of place. But I fear on this point he is hopeless.

Among the most treasured of my possessions is an autograph letter of Thackeray's in which, replying to a friend's request that he would deliver a lecture in his city, he said,—*

'My lecturing days are over. Oh! how I used to hate it!—and I could not engage my jaw for a month or five weeks ahead. But I am pleased to have been asked, and to have retained kind remembrance.'

And then in a characteristic postscript he adds,—

* The letter was to my friend Mr Frank Dalzell Finlay, at that time the well-known editor and proprietor of *The Northern Whig*, Belfast.

‘Besides, I have no lectures!’

I am afraid that if Bret Harte were asked he would say ‘ditto’ to Thackeray.

CHAPTER V

HOW HE BECAME CONSUL

BRET HARTE's first stay in England had to be a comparatively short one, for, indeed, he was on his way to fulfil his official duties as American Consul at the Prussian town—Crefeld. In this manner it seems to be America's way of conferring honour upon her distinguished literary sons. It is a custom of which we in England cannot complain, inasmuch as it enables us to see, appreciate, and make acquaintance with some of the most distinguished men of the day. Bret Harte, no doubt, felt pleased at being thus honoured, and yet he has told me, with his own irresistible blend of humour and sadness, of the awful sense of

loneliness that came over him when he found himself a solitary stranger in that distant German township. At times it seemed almost unbearable to the man who, in the fulfilment of duty, had left his kindred and friends in America, and who must have had the tingle of his hearty English welcome in his ears. One night, while on a lonely prowl round unfamiliar and probably unattractive streets, he found himself instinctively gazing through the windows of a bookseller's shop, and there, in the displayed volumes, he saw the name of

BRET HARTE.

In a moment his feelings changed. If he, as a personality, was as yet unknown in Germany, his works had preceded him, and his walk was, we may be sure, continued with an elastic step. To find oneself in an absolutely strange and foreign town, where you feel yourself to be an alien,

thus suddenly and splendidly face to face with your own name must be a strange experience. No doubt it acts as a glorious tonic!

More or less leisure gave the Consul opportunities for correspondence with his old and new friends. Now Bret Harte is one of the most delightful of letter writers, and letters, to those in whom confidence can be reposed, often give a greater insight into the character and true feelings of a man than any amount of biography. Take the case of Charles Dickens. The volumes by John Forster that tell the story of his life are full of charm, but their interest pales under the light of the store of letters so discreetly edited, and so happily published by his sister-in-law and his eldest daughter. But these did not see the light until ten years after Dickens's death, and in the meantime their publication became possible.

Private correspondence should at all times

be considered a sacred thing,—and upon this point I know of no man more sensitively punctilious than Bret Harte. And yet his letters have such a fascination of their own, and I so want my readers to appreciate them with me,—that (strongly as I feel with him the sanctity of such communications) I am tempted to produce the humour and the fragrance of one or two of them.

They were written from Crefeld; they relate to a dog, who, poor fellow, died years ago, and so no harm can be done. Nay, I hope good will be done, for I shall not only be able to illustrate Bret Harte's captivating style as a correspondent, but to demonstrate the minute manner in which he enters into every detail of his day's doings.

It happened that when my friend was on his English lecturing tour it was my good fortune to have him for my guest, and he very much admired a beautiful St Bernard then in my possession, whose name 'Jung-

frau' is indicative of size and sex. He asked me if it were possible that if ever 'Jungfrau' became a mother he might become the master of one of her offspring. Gladly I gave my promise, and when in due time I found my favourite proudly polishing up three beautifully soft, curly, and in all ways promising, sons, who were promptly christened 'Shem,' 'Ham,' and 'Japhet,' I wrote to the Consul of Crefeld giving a description of them, and saying he could take his choice.

Here let me mention that 'Jungfrau' and the father of her family, who looked just then like living balls of downy fur, could boast of the bluest of the blue St Bernard blood. Indeed, their very near relation was the handsome and gigantic 'Chang,' made familiar by George du Maurier to all the readers of *Punch*.

Bret Harte's reply came from Germany:—

'Nothing but the fear of showing an un-

seemly and indelicate anxiety,' he wrote, 'kept me from the most minute enquiries regarding the condition of a member of your family during the last three weeks. I have lain awake o' night thinking of her,—having full faith in your experience and natural solicitude,—yet wondering if she had proper medical attendance, or that discreet supervision which is better than technical skill. Need I say how thoroughly rejoiced I was yesterday morning to receive your confirmation of the happy and triumphant issue! I think I prefer, all things being equal, "Shem." "Ham" might be preferable if he had the colour attribtued by the best authorities to his Noachian namesake. A *black* St Bernard would be as beautiful and terrible as a thunderstorm. But I am very very grateful, my dear fellow, for "Shem." "Shem" let it be, then! *Vivat* "Shem"! You have forgotten to tell me how *old* he is, so I cannot say if he will be able to bear the fatigues and

excitement of continental travel. I don't want to expose him prematurely to foreign temptation and habits without some previous home experience, or to take him from his mother and you rashly. Therefore please let me know at once. Meanwhile consider him *mine*,—act for me vicariously,—let him have the best at my expense. Procure for him a collar with a silver plate,—not *too* expensive, but suitable to *my degree* and *his*, which shall bear the legend "Shem." Let him do as he likes, short of active aggression upon the persons of your family—and send the bill to me. Give my best regards to your wife, and beg her to bear with him yet a while longer, for my sake.'

Later on, when 'Shem' had emerged from puppyhood to the massive proportions of a noble St Bernard, he wrote:—

'Pray do not for an instant give way to the belief that I have forgotten "Shem"

or his kind entertainer. Only the fact that I have asked my Government for an "exchange" from Crefeld, and am now waiting to know *where* I am to go, has kept me from sending for him. As matters stand, I must ask you to bear with him and his discomposing greatness a little longer. I should not like a good dog to share the uncertainties of an American official. But I am delighted to hear of his progress—his physical welfare and his moral advancement. Yet, my dear Pemberton, you say nothing of his *spiritual* tendencies. Does he know the interior of a church? Dare I take him into a cathedral with me? (if it be large enough). Has he ever been known to bark at a bishop or a beneficed clergyman? These are not light questions, but momentous ones. A terrier of my acquaintance has been known to follow a priest through squares, violently objecting to him, and has gone out of his way, in a cathedral, to insult the hypercritically crossed legs of the effigy of

a crusader! Pat “Shem’s” head for me,—gently but not patronisingly,—and read him this letter.’

In his next letter he said :—

‘When I took up the photograph of the noble “Shem,” and read the few gentle, reproachful lines you had written on its back, I realised for the first time what a thoroughly abject villain I was. How could I have basely abandoned that beautiful and gifted creature?—how could I oblige you to remind me of my duties during these long months? I stand powerless to excuse myself. I am an unnatural parent,—an ungrateful master,—a fraudulent and hypocritical guardian! Can you forgive me? Do you think “Shem” can? Will he not secretly despise me? Will he not give me a bad character to other dogs?’

‘When I left Crefeld three months ago,’—(this letter was written from Innellan on

the Clyde)—‘I thought of him and you, and said to my feeble soul, “I will arise and go unto “Shem” and those who abide with him, even at Birmingham, and take him to Glasgow” (his consulate had now been transferred from Prussia to Scotland) “and kill the fatted calf, etc., etc.”; but, alas! when I came to London, I fell into evil ways and did nothing. Many times since then have I made good resolutions regarding “Shem’s” future and forgotten them! I have talked about him and what I was going to do with him until I have become burdensome to my friends. I was on the point of writing to you when my colleague, Wilson King of Birmingham, wrote to me that he had seen and had been nearly knocked down by “Shem.” I was at the Queen’s Hotel, Glasgow, one night last week, and left my card for *two* Pembertons (thinking one of them might be you and possibly the other “Shem”) whose names were on the register. Will you send me a couple more photo-

graphs of "Shem." I want to send one to my family in America.

'Don't be alarmed if you should hear of my having nearly blown the top of my head off. Last Monday I had my face badly cut by the recoil of an overloaded gun. I do not know yet beneath these bandages whether I shall be permanently marked.* At present I am invisible, and have tried to keep the accident a secret.

'When the surgeon was stitching me together, the son of the house, a boy of twelve, came timidly to the door of my room, "Tell Mr Bret Harte it's all right," he said; "*he killed the hare!*"'

The next letter was from London, and it said:—

'No, it is *I* who should do the apologetic thing to you and be absolutely servile to "Shem" for my unnatural neglect of you

* Happily it was not so.

both. Intercede for me with my noble enemy and nobler animal. How good in you to be so patient with the foundling. Thoughtful and considerate as your suggestions are' (I had suggested that I had better find 'Shem' another home and replace him with a younger dog), 'I still think I must cling to "Shem," my first love, though I have never seen him and he might aggressively cling to me on our first meeting. Better is the present adolescent "Shem" than a puppy *in futuro*; besides, the "Jungfrau" may, like other mountains, be delivered of a mouse! But I think I have found a way of bringing him nearer me. I could not keep him in lodgings in Glasgow without armour-plating the furniture and enlarging the doors. Some kind friends with whom I stay when in London are most anxious to keep him for me. They have a goodish-sized house and nine (9!) playful children who are ready to worship him. You may say to "Shem" that they

are a genteel and even titled family! I would not introduce him to other, or cast the slightest shadow on his brilliant London future.

‘Now, seriously, how could I get him here—by express to this address, or by parcel delivery, or freight? Nothing should I like better than to bring him myself, but I have already overstayed my “leave” and must return to Glasgow in a few days. I expect to come to London again to spend the Christmas holidays. Could I take you *en route*? Let me thank you again and again.—With best regards to Mrs Pemberton, and a shake of “Shem’s” paw, always his and your friend,

‘BRET HARTE.’

But early in the new year (1883) he had to write—from Glasgow:—

‘I am heartbroken! What shall I say? What do *you* say? What—alas!—will “Shem” say? Will he not be glad to

get rid of such an unnatural master? Perhaps it is for the best that he should abandon me. I never should have dared to look him in the face. As it is, I never meet a big dog in the streets but I have been bathed in blushes. Whene'er I take my walks abroad I tremble to meet him and have him openly denounce and expose me to other dogs as a disgrace to my kind. I never hear a ring at the door-bell without expecting the servant to enter and say, "Please, sir, 'ere's a big dog a-sitting and a-howling on the doorsteps, with Mr Pemberton's compliments, and what are you going to do about it?" And yet I have been base enough to be proud of him, and to boast of him, and to magnify his proportions. If the conversation turned on big dogs, I always said, "Ah! but you should see mine!" When pressed to exhibit this abnormal growth, I meekly said, "He is staying with one of my most intimate

friends, to whom he is deeply attached!" And then the silent wings of disbelief would gradually enfold that company and I would disappear. Seriously, my dear fellow, I am at the present time such a wanderer myself that unless "Shem" actually did the St Bernard hospice business for me, and carried me about with him and a flask, I don't see what I could do with him just now. I couldn't carry *him* about, nor would he be content to lie in the corridor of my hotel at Glasgow. My fond hope was to place him with some suburban friend and visit him two or three times a week—but that is past—and I fear he is getting too old to attach himself to me after that "occasional" fashion. If you will keep your promise and give me a puppy to take his place, I promise you to make amends by undertaking his early education *myself* this time. I hope to come your way in a few weeks, and we will discuss it further.

Until then, give him my love and say, if needs be, "Hail and Farewell" for me.'

'Why put in all this nonsense about a dog?' I can hear the hypercritical ask. Well, I do so because I want to show how this busy man thinks it worth his while to take infinite pains even with the smallest details of his life. Besides, it seemed my only chance of giving my readers an insight into Bret Harte's methods as a writer of letters. Poor 'Shem' died long ago, and his descendants are not likely to be ruffled by this publication of facts connected with a career which (for a St Bernard) promised to be a distinguished one. As a correspondent Bret Harte has another charm. Although he is tied to his desk for many hours in the day, he never fails to reply immediately to the letters of his friends.

I do not think that his consular life,

with its rather prosaic duties of signing invoices and so forth, was to his taste, but it was well for his readers that he undertook those duties, for, taking his tone from his surroundings, he gave us some wonderfully true and attractive pictures of Germany and Scotland. He never wrote in a more pleasant vein than in the stories in which he speaks of himself as 'The Consul.'

In Germany he focussed the manners and customs of the people with a microscopic nicety.

Who, knowing Germany, does not recognise the absolute truth of his views from his *Spion*?

'Outside of my window,' he writes, 'two narrow perpendicular mirrors, parallel with the casement, project in the street, yet with a certain unobtrusiveness of angle that enables them to reflect the people who pass without any reciprocal

disclosure of their own. The men and women hurrying by, not only do not know they are observed, but, what is worse, do not even see their own reflection in this hypocritical plane, and are consequently unable through its aid to correct any carelessness of garb, gait or demeanour. At first this seems to be taking an unfair advantage of the human animal, who invariably assumes an attitude when he is conscious of being under human focus; but I observe that my neighbours' windows, right and left, have a similar apparatus, that this custom is evidently a local one, and the locality is German.'

Being an American stranger, and willing to leave the morality of the transaction to the locality, and adapt himself to the custom, his keen eyes saw many things through his *Spion*. I must content myself with briefly quoting one or two of them. He wonders why the majority of those

who pass his mirror have weak eyes and have at an early age invoked the aid of the optician.

‘Why,’ he asks, ‘are these people, physically in all else so much stronger than my countrymen, deficient in eyesight? Or to omit the passing testimony of my *Spion*, and take my own personal experience, why does my young friend Max — brightest of all schoolboys, who already wears the cap that denotes the highest class—why does he shock me by suddenly drawing forth a pair of spectacles, that upon his fresh, rosy face would be an obvious mocking imitation of the *Herr Papa* — if German children could ever, by any possibility be irreverent? Or why does the Fräulein Marie, his sister, pink as Aurora, round as Hebe, suddenly veil her blue eyes with a golden *lorgnette* in the midst of our polyglot conversation? Is it to evade the direct, admiring glance of the impulsive American?

Dare I say *no?* Dare I say that that frank, clear, honest earnest return of the eye which has, on the Continent, most unfairly brought my fair countrywomen under criticism, is quite as common to her more carefully-guarded, tradition-hedged German sisters? No, it is not that. Is it anything in these emerald and opal-tinted skies which seem so unreal to the American eye, and for the first time explain what seemed to be the unreality of German art?—in these mysterious yet restful Rhine fogs, which prolong the twilight and hang the curtain of romance even over mid-day? Surely not. Is it not rather, O Herr Professor, profound in analogy and philosophy,—is it not rather this abominable black-letter — this elsewhere-discarded, uncouth, slowly-decaying text known as the German alphabet, that plucks out the bright eyes of youth and bristles the gateways of your language with a *chevaux de frise* of splintered

rubbish? Why must I hesitate whether it is an accident of the printer's press or the poor quality of the paper that makes this letter a "k" or a "t"? Why must I halt in an emotion or a thought because "s" and "f" are so nearly alike? Is it not enough that I, an impulsive American, accustomed to do a thing first and reflect upon it afterwards, must grope my way through a blind alley of substantives and adjectives, only to find the verb of action in an obscure corner, without ruining my eyesight in the action?'

He makes it clear that the American regards the dog from the same affectionate point of view as the Englishman.

'This is the fifth or sixth dog,' he writes, 'that has passed my *Spion*, harnessed to a small, barrow-like cart and tugging painfully at a burden so ludicrously disproportionate to his size, that it would be a

burlesque but for the poor dog's sad sincerity. Perhaps it is because I have the barbarian's fondness for dogs, and for their lawless, gentle, loving uselessness that I rebel against this unnatural servitude. It seems as monstrous as if a child were put between the shafts and made to carry burdens, and I have come to regard those men and women who in the weakest perfunctory way affect to aid the poor brute, by laying idle hands on the barrow behind, as I would unnatural parents. Pegasus harnessed to the Thracian herdman's plough was no more of a desecration. I fancy the poor dog seems to feel the monstrosity of the performance, and in sheer shame for his master forgivingly tries to assume it is *play*; and I have seen a little "collie" running along, barking and endeavouring to leap and gambol in the shafts, before a load that anyone out of this locality would call the direst cruelty. Nor do the older or more powerful dogs

seem to become accustomed to it. When his cruel taskmaster halts with his wares, instantly the dog, either by sitting down in his harness, or crawling over the shafts, or by some unmistakable dog-like trick, utterly scatters any such delusion of even the habit of servitude. The few of his race who do not work in this ducal city seem to have lost their democratic canine sympathies, and seem to look upon him with something of that indifferent calm with which yonder officer eyes the road-mender in the ditch below him. He loses even the characteristics of species—the common cur and mastiff look alike in harness—the burden levels all distinctions. I have said that he was generally sincere in his efforts. I recall but one instance to the contrary. I remember a young collie who first attracted my attention by his persistent barking. Whether he did this, as the plough-boy whistled, for "want of thought," or whether it was a running

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protest against his occupation, I could not determine, until one day I noticed that in barking he slightly threw up his neck and shoulders, and that the two-wheeled barrow-like vehicle behind him, having its weight equally poised on the wheels by the trucks in the hands of its driver, enabled him by this movement to cunningly throw the centre of gravity and the greater weight on the man—a fact which that less sagacious brute never discerned. Perhaps I am using a strong expression regarding his driver; it may be that the purely animal wants of the dog, in the way of food, care and shelter, are more bountifully supplied in servitude than they are in freedom; becoming a valuable and useful property, he may be cared for and protected as such—an odd recollection that this argument has been used forcibly in regard to human slavery in my own country strikes me here—but his pictur-esque ness and poetry are gone, and I

cannot help thinking that the people who have lost this gentle, sympathetic, characteristic figure from their domestic life and surroundings have not acquired an equal gain through his harsh labours.'

How true this is, and how wanton is the cruelty that compels the dog to do work for which it is wholly unqualified. One has only to look at the soft-padded foot of a dog to see the pain he must suffer in dragging loads over hard and stony roads. Besides, the dog is the friend of man, and, except in the sporting work that he enjoys, should never be regarded as a servant, or asked to do servant's labour. I can remember the days when dogs did this cruel cart-work in England.

Quite irresistible is his description of the German carnival where all was supposed to be rollicking gaiety, and which was, apparently, dismally dull. It was the annual holiday of the lower classes, anticipated

with eagerness and achieved with difficulty. All engaged in it wore some sort of fancy costume, all were closely masked, and all carried a short, gaily-striped *bâton* of split wood, called a *Pritsche*, which, when struck sharply on the back or shoulders of some spectator or fellow-masker, emitted a clattering, rasping sound.

‘To wander hand-in-hand,’ he tells us, ‘down this broad *allée*, to strike almost mechanically and often monotonously at each other with their *bâtons*, seemed to be the extent of that wild dissipation. The crowd thickened, young men with false noses, hideous masks, cheap black or red cotton dominoes, soldiers in uniform, crowded past each other up and down the promenade, all carrying a *Pritsche*, and exchanging blows with each other, but always with the same slow seriousness of demeanour, which, with their silence, gave the performance the effect of a religious

rite. Occasionally someone shouted; perhaps a dozen young fellows broke out in song; but the shout was provocative of nothing, the song faltered as if the singers were frightened at their own voices. One blithe fellow, with a bear's head on his fur-capped shoulders, began to dance, but on the crowd stopping to observe him seriously he apparently thought better of it and slipped away. Nevertheless, the solemn beating of the *Pritsche* over each other's backs went on. I remember that I was followed the whole length of the *allée* by a little girl scarcely twelve years old, in a bright striped skirt and black mask, who from time to time struck me over the shoulders with a regularity and sad persistency that was peculiarly irresistible to me, the more so, as I could not help thinking that it was not half so amusing to herself.'

When the increasing gloom of the

evening made the figures of the pensive but apparently contented masqueraders undistinguishable, the Consul turned into the first cross-street.

‘As I lifted my hat to my persistent young friend with the *Pritsche*,’ he records, ‘I fancied she looked as relieved as myself. If, however, I was mistaken—if that child’s pathway through life be strewn with rosy recollections of the unresisting back of the stranger American — if any burden, O Gretchen, laid upon thy young shoulders be lighter for the trifling one thou didst lay on mine, know then that I too am content.’

Surely if it were only for the sake of these vivid sketches it was well for the admirers of Bret Harte that he was condemned for a time to look at mankind through a German *Spion*?

The Crefeld Consul, too, figures frequently and always pleasantly through many capital

stories in which the 'local colour' is always faithfully preserved. One of the best of these is *Unser Karl*, in which the American official is delightfully hoodwinked by the most artful as well as most amiable of Gallic spies.

When he went to Glasgow the same happy state of things occurred. 'The American Consul at St Kentigern,' as for story purposes he calls himself, was quickly at home with his Scotch surroundings and instantly grasped the Scotch character. As for his delineation of Scotch scenery, take the following as an example, and note the gentle satire of the writer who had seen nature on such a much grander scale in California. No doubt he had been told that the majestic scenery of Scotland would astonish him.

'He' (the Consul) 'soon found himself settled at the farthest end of a long, narrow loch, made longer and narrower by the steep hillside of rock and heather which flanked

its chilly surface on either side, and whose inequalities were lost in the firs and larches that filled ravine and chasm. The fragrant road that ran sinuously through their shadowy depths was invisible from the loch ; no protuberance broke the seeming sheer declivity ; the even sky-line was indented in two places —one where it was cracked into a fanciful resemblance to a human profile, the other where it was curved like a bowl. Need it be said that one was distinctly recognised as the silhouette of a prehistoric giant, and that the other was his drinking cup ? Need it be added that neither lent the slightest human suggestion to the solitude ? A toy-like pier extending into the loch, midway from the barren shore, only heightened the desolation. And when the little steam-boat that occasionally entered the loch took away a solitary passenger from the pierhead, the simplest parting was invested with a dreary loneliness that might have brought tears to the most hardened eye.'

But though to his enlarged vision a scene—that would, no doubt, have struck the ordinary English tourist as impressive as well as picturesque—seemed trivial, he goes on to do it justice:—

‘ Still,’ he writes, ‘ when the shadow of either hillside was not reaching across the loch, the meridian sun, chancing upon this coy mirror, made the most of it. Then it was that, seen from above, it flashed like a falchion lying between the hills; then its reflected glory, striking up, transfigured the two acclivities, tipped the cold heather with fire, gladdened the funereal pines, and warmed the ascetic rocks.’

His mastery of the Scotch dialect quickly became perfect, and all his Scotch characters are good. In *Ailsa Callender*, the heroine of *Young Robin Gray*, he has given us as sweet and winsome a North British lassie as even William Black has bequeathed to the

lovers of his evergreen Highland stories; and in *A Rose of Glenbogie*—the rather daring picture of the doings of a house-party in a Scotch country mansion—we hear the swirl of the bag-pipes, are introduced to kilted lairds, listen to the characteristic Scotch conversation, and feel that we are in the air that is breathed on the north side of the Tweed.

Really it seems a pity that Bret Harte was not for a time consul in Dublin! To think of the tales we should then have had about Ireland is, to say the least of it, tantalising!

CHAPTER VI

HOW HE PENS HIS PORTRAITS

I HAVE already said something concerning Bret Harte's methods of writing, but before I deal with (and, I fear, do poor justice to) this chapter I should, I think, briefly dwell upon them.

He himself has written of the rise of the now popular 'short story,' and modestly disclaimed its invention. That he was one of its pioneers, however, is a matter of fact, and it is interesting to hear from him how it was planted in American soil, took root, perennially blossomed, and sent its seedlings to other countries.

'While the American literary imagina-

tion,' he says, 'was still under the influence of English tradition, an unexpected factor was developing to diminish its power.* It was *Humour*—of a quality as distinct and original as the country and civilisation in which it was developed. It was at first noticeable in the anecdote or "story," and, after the fashion of such beginnings, was orally transmitted. It was common in the bar-rooms, the gatherings in "country stores," and finally at public meetings in the mouths of "stump orators." Arguments were clinched and political principles illustrated by "a funny story." It invaded even the camp meetings and pulpit. It at last received the currency of the public Press. But wherever met it was so distinctly original and novel, so individual and characteristic, that it was at once known and appreciated abroad as "an American story."

* The article from which I briefly quote appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* for July 1899 by permission of the 'International Library of Famous Literature.'

Crude at first, it received a literary polish in the Press, but its dominant quality remained. It was concise and condense, yet suggestive. It was delightfully extravagant—or a miracle of understatement. It voiced not only the dialect, but the habits of thought of a people or locality. It gave a new interest to slang. From a paragraph of a dozen lines it grew into half a column, but always retaining its conciseness and felicity of statement. It was a foe to prolixity of any kind, it admitted no fine writing nor affectation of style. It went directly to the point. It was burdened by no conscientiousness; it was often irreverent; it was devoid of all moral responsibility—but it was original! By degrees it developed character with its incident, often, in a few lines, gave a striking photograph of a community or a section, but always reached its conclusion without an unnecessary word. It became—and still exists as—an essential

feature of newspaper literature. It was the parent of the American "short story."

Then he goes on to speak of the old Argonaut days and of the singular fraternity of that ideal republic into which all men entered free and equal. There—' Distinction of previous position or advantages were unknown, even record or reputation for ill or good were of little benefit or embarrassment to the possessor; men were accepted for what they actually were, and what they could do in taking their part in the camp or settlement. The severest economy, the direst poverty, the most menial labour carried no shame nor disgrace with it; individual success brought neither envy nor jealousy. What was one man's fortune to-day might be the luck of another to-morrow. Add to this Utopian simplicity of the people the environment of magnificent scenery, a unique climate, and a vegetation that

was marvellous in its proportions and spontaneity of growth; let it be further considered that the strongest relief was given to this picture by its setting among the crumbling ruins of early Spanish possession—whose monuments still existed in Mission and Presidio, and whose legitimate Castilian descendants still lived and moved in picturesque and dignified contrast to their energetic invaders—and it must be admitted that a condition of romantic and dramatic possibilities was created unrivalled in history.'

That was certainly the ideal environment for Bret Harte! The people of the old world appealed to him equally with the people of the new; the 'magnificent scenery' appealed to him; and above all the *humour* of the new life appealed to him. Whether he actually created it or not, the vogue for the short story came at the right time for him; the anecdotes that he heard by the camp

fires were elaborated and moulded into form; and the charm, finish, tenderness and wit with which he polished and perfected them immediately excited admiration. Then, added to the anecdotes, were his own observations—observations made with the keenest of eyes, and stored away in the most retentive of memories. To Bret Harte the merest suggestion was the germ of the living short story. The wonderful thing is, that on the small canvases on which he elected to paint he could produce such perfect and realistic pictures!

Was it not by orally drinking in the old Scotch legends, that in ballad and tale had been handed down from generation to generation of Highlanders, that Sir Walter Scott laid the foundation for his immortal works?

Again, in dealing with Bret Harte's methods, and that early environment which opened such a rich storehouse of

rich material for him, let me quote his former colleague, Mr Noah Brooks :—

‘When,’ he says, ‘we began to hear in California the first faint echoes of the world-wide fame that was drawing nearer and nearer to Bret Harte, the mass of his San Francisco readers were incredulous. They would not believe that they had so long harboured among them a genius whose work was now eagerly sought for all over the English-speaking world. He had created new types in literature, a set of characters that were absolutely unique, and while Californians acknowledged the accuracy of his limning, they failed to see in those wonderful pictures anything that should move the admiration of the world.’

The old, old story! The reception of a prophet in his own country! But those who had in the old journalistic days worked side by side with him must have seen what was coming,

for the same authority goes on to say:—

‘When he began to write, it became at once evident that the sureness and delicacy of his touch was a natural gift, not an acquirement; and nobody was more surprised than he by the ready acclaim with which the originality of his work was received. . . . Writing and re-writing, filing and polishing, he was never satisfied with his work; yet when it left his hands it appeared to the rest of us to be absolutely flawless in its graceful, pellucid, and yet compact literary style. . . . Notwithstanding his long absence from the original source of his inspiration,* he not only retains his primacy of American short-story writers, but his skill in limning the Far Western types of character which first engaged his pencil still remains to charm. The story of

* Mr Noah Brooks's article appeared in *The Century Magazine* for July 1899.

“The Passing of Enriquez,” printed in *The Century* for June 1898, and the first number of this series of two, “The Devotion of Enriquez,” printed in the same magazine for November 1895, have the dramatic crispness and the fluent humour that delighted us when *The Luck of Roaring Camp* made the name of Bret Harte famous in English literature.’

I cannot take leave of this accredited critic without quoting an anecdote from his pen which wonderfully exemplifies Bret Harte’s minute and accurate method.

‘He came to his friend one day with a request for help in a small mathematical problem. How many pounds of flour were there in a sack, and how long could a certain number of persons subsist on a specified quantity of food? While we were figuring out this novel proposition, he explained that he had

beguiled a party of refugees into the wilds of the Sierra Nevada, where, overtaken by a snowstorm, they were slowly starving to death. How much longer could any one of them hold out? The puzzle was solved to his satisfaction, but months passed before the tragic tale of *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* was published. On these absolutely precise methods he works to-day.

And now for a few words on the characters that these processes have brought into being.

Place aux dames. I have been amazed to find that no less a writer than Julian Hawthorne has said, 'Bret Harte seems not to like women, or to respect them.' To those who know Bret Harte, the statement is as extraordinary as it is baseless. To the real student of his works it must ring false. It is true that in his usual minute way he thoroughly understands feminine foibles, and he

seems to take a delight in illuminating them. But it is done in an amused spirit of good humour, and we love his womenkind none the less because they are flesh and blood. Remember, too,^{probably} that he writes of most of them in the strange environment in which he found and learned to understand them. It can hardly be imagined that the womenkind of the men he has so vigorously drawn were a set of 'society ladies!' The wonder is that they are for the most part so decorous—so self-restrained—and always so *feminine*. *Feminine* is a favourite word with him—and right well he understands its full meaning.

The best answer to the curious idea that has got into Mr Julian Hawthorne's mind that Bret Harte does not 'like women,' lies in the fact that women like him. Whether with young girls or their mothers, his gentle manner conveys with it a singular charm, and he always

seems to think it worth his while not only to talk to them, but to talk his best. They like him none the less, be it noted, because they know how well he understands their little vanities and by no means unbecoming personal fancies. In circles where he is intimate he will playfully, and in some half-hidden way, allude to them. Then they will laugh and later on acknowledge the truth of his discernment. Then there is Mr Julian Hawthorne's still wilder view that Bret Harte does not 'respect women.' To carry out the purpose of his stories he has been compelled to draw women of all types, but surely those who trouble to study them carefully will find out that however deplorable their condition might be he always speaks of them with an extenuation and pity that amount to respect, and he shows clearly that it is the deception of man that makes the poor creatures what they are. Apart from his

stories, I know that he would agree with that great American preacher, Robert Collyer, who, in speaking of what he called the 'Folly of Solomon,' said:— 'His relation to woman was of such a nature as to drive him from the presence of such pure and noble women as, thank God, never fall out of the world, and never will, satirists and Solomon to the contrary notwithstanding.'

Perhaps the great weaknesses of the majority of Bret Harte's heroines are vanity, coquetry and love of admiration. In short, they are very very human and their characters are so firmly and so finely etched that we catch every glimpse of their failings. It is true that these ladies are apt to become very troublesome to their fathers, brothers, lovers and husbands, but possibly if we look around we shall see something of the same sort going on even in our cultivated English world of to-day.

Not long ago Mr George Gissing, in an

intensely searching and very clever criticism, made the following startling declaration concerning the women drawn by the master hand of Charles Dickens:—‘Wonderful as fact, and admirable as art, are the numberless pictures of more or less detestable widows, wives and spinsters which appear throughout his books. Beyond dispute, they must be held among his finest work ; this portraiture alone would establish his claim to greatness. And I think it might be forcibly argued that, for incontestable proof of Dickens’s fidelity in reproducing the life he knew, one should turn in the first place to his gallery of foolish, ridiculous and offensive women.

‘These remarkable creatures belong for the most part to one rank of life—that which we vaguely designate as the lower middle class. In general their circumstances are comfortable ; they suffer no hardship—save that of birth, which they do not perceive as such ; nothing is asked of them but a quiet

and amiable discharge of household duties ; they are treated by their male kindred with great, often with extraordinary, consideration. Yet their characteristic is acidity of temper and boundless licence of querulous or insulting talk. The real business of their lives is to make all about them as uncomfortable as they can. Invariably they are unintelligent and untaught ; very often they are flagrantly imbecile. Their very virtues (if such persons can be said to have any) become a scourge. In the highways and byways of life, by the fireside, and in the bedchamber, their voices shrill upon the terrified ear. It is difficult to believe that death can stifle them ; one imagines them upon the threshold of some other world, sounding confusion among unhappy spirits who hoped to have found peace.'

When I read this terrible impeachment against an old and hitherto almost unsuspected circle of friends I had to rub my eyes. I could not believe in Mr Gissing's flagrant

and wholesale charges. And yet, when I came to study the matter carefully, trying to regard it from his hard-and-fast point of view, and endeavouring to see through his gloomy glasses, I had to admit that there was some truth in his statements, and I suppose this is what the ultra-caustic critic sees in some of Bret Harte's heroines. It is well that we do not all spend our time in trying to find and point out the worst side of things.

I think most men blessed with kindly hearts and sympathetic natures understand why David Copperfield fell in love with poor little Dora, although Mr Gissing describes her as a 'brainless, nerveless, profitless simpleton,' and I am sorry for those who cannot enter into honest Joe Willet's feelings with regard to pretty Dolly Varden, although we are now told that she was 'totally without education . . . and for relaxation she may smirk and simper and tell little fibs, and smile treacherous little smiles, and on

occasion drop a little tear, which means nothing but pique or selfish annoyance.'

It is absolutely certain that Dickens 'liked and respected women,' and yet, if the two critics I have quoted are right, he should on this charge be pilloried side by side with Bret Harte.

When Mr Julian Hawthorne goes on to say that Bret Harte 'has contributed no lovable or respectable woman to literature,' one loses patience, for one begins to feel that the critic has not studied his author. Numberless flat contradictions might be made to this bold allegation, but I will content myself with referring to four types. Where could a reader find a higher-bred or more noble-hearted lady than Grace Nevil in *A Mæcenas of the Pacific Slope*? a sweeter or truer 'gentlewoman' than Euphemia Trotter in *Mr Bilson's House-keeper*? a more splendid specimen of a courageous, helpful, self-denying wife than Mrs M'Kinstry, the mother of Cressy, and

the devoted sharer of her husband's troubles on his threatened ranch? Where a finer specimen of cultivated and impulsive girlhood than Miss Falkner in *Clarence*? Such types abound throughout his pages and may be found by all who choose to look for them and enjoy their society.

I think Bret Harte feels that many women might take a far higher view of themselves and their opportunities than they are disposed to do. You remember Coventry Patmore's beautiful verse—

'Ah, wasteful woman, she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapened paradise ;
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spilled the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine.'

As I read the most sympathetic of the long series of 'short stories' I often find these lines running through my mind, and I

think it means that I detect in those prose poems the sweet sympathy their author feels for a failing sisterhood, coupled with a note of remonstrance that they so resistlessly trust misleading man.

We are all familiar with the men of his creation, and though their environment is strange to us, and their coarse habits and strong language have shocked some puritanical readers, the man who 'knows himself' recognises the true quality of the clay out of which they have been quickened into life. Adventurers, miners, gamblers, loafers, duellists, ranch-men, boasters, hypocrites, coarse but true-hearted men, cultured gentlemen, paupers, millionaires and Chinamen, they are all human, and immediately appeal to all who make it their care to understand human nature, and grasp the fact that we are all fellow-passengers to the terminus of life's journey. Bret Harte does not idealise his men—he lets us see their coarse surroundings, he makes us

understand their rough, dissolute and almost barbarous ways of life—but he puts into nearly all of them that milk of human kindness which is ever ready to succour the poor and oppressed. Adding to this their indomitable courage and invincible sense of humour, he presents us with a series of quaint yet life-like portraits that has never been surpassed. Let us, by way of example, try the ring of one of his rough miners' characters—Richard Bullen, the immortal hero of *How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar*, the 'Christmas Carol' of California.

We find Bullen and his rough companions seated despondently around the red-hot stove of Thompson's Store. High water has suspended their regular mining occupations, and a consequent lack of money and whisky has rendered them unusually dull. To them comes a comrade who, although only fifty years of age, is known amongst them as 'The Old Man.' On hospitable

thought intent, 'The Old Man' suggests that they shall spend this Christmas Eve at his cabin, for, 'Ye see, boys,' he says, 'I kinder thought—that is—I sorter had an idee, just passin' like, you know, that maybe ye'd all like to come over to my house to-night and have a sort of tear round.'

The invitation is on the verge of acceptance when one of the invited guests suggests that perhaps 'The Old Man's' wife (his second wife) may not like it, when another strikes in suggesting that it was 'The Old Man's' house, and that, invoking the Divine Power, if the case were his own, he would invite whom he pleased, even if in so doing he imperilled his salvation. The Powers of Evil, he further remarked, should contend against him vainly. All this delivered with a terseness and vigour lost in this necessary translation.

Was strong language ever more carefully wrapped up than this? Could any more subtle

way be conceived of letting the reader know the nature of the company he is in?

An adjournment to 'The Old Man's' house is resolved upon, and Dick Bullen, the oracle and leader of Simpson's Bar, leads the way with a leap and characteristic howl.

Arrived at their destination they find 'The Old Man's' little boy by his first marriage terribly ailing, and after they have exhausted the demijohn of whisky they hear him from his little bed say in plaintive tones to his father :—

'To-morrer's Christmiss—ain't it?' And when he's told 'Yes' continues :—'Mar says that everywhere else but yer everybody gives things to everybody Christmiss . . . She says thar's a man they call Sandy Claws, not a white man, you know, but a kind o' Chinemin, comes down the chimbley night afore Christmiss and gives things to children—boys like me. Puts 'em in their butes! Thet's what she tried to play upon

me.' And then, after a little while :—'It's mighty cur'o's about Christmiss—ain't it? Why do they call it Christmiss?'

'The Old Man' replies in so low a voice that he is not heard by the listening miners, but Johnny's reply, 'Yes—I've heard o' *Him* before,' is, and seems to have had its effect on the Argonauts, for when 'The Old Man' returns from the sick bed of his child he finds the party broken up and Dick Bullen alone sitting by the dying embers of the fire. That he has a purpose in view is soon apparent. Outside the cabin his comrades had caught and saddled an awful mare. 'She was not a pretty picture,' says her biographer. 'From her Roman nose to her rising haunches, from her arched spine hidden by the stiff *machillas* of a Mexican saddle, to her thick, straight, bony legs, there was not a line of equine grace. In her half-blind but wholly vicious white eyes, in her protruding under

lip, in her monotonous colour, there was nothing but ugliness.'

Astride upon this demoniacal, buck-jumping, kicking, rearing, and in all ways formidable, creature, Dick Bullen made his famous midnight ride through many an alarming venture, through flood and by field, to the far-off town of Tuttleville. His wild ride is described in Bret Harte's most graphic style, and ranks, indeed, amongst the most stirring things he has written. And the object of the ride? Why, to bring back Dick Bullen, weary almost to death, with a shattered right arm, and weak with loss of blood, carrying a few poor toys—'cheap and barbaric enough, goodness knows, but bright with paint and tinsel. One of them was broken; another,' the chronicler says, 'I fear was irretrievably ruined by water; and on the third—ah, me!—there was a cruel spot.'

Yes, the object of the ride for which the

rough miners had given their last coins, and Dick Bullen had risked his life, was to show this poor, sickly and half-heathen little Johnny that they remembered all about Christmas Day and its childhood's associations, and that they wished to bring them to him. In the author's words:—
'And even so bedraggled, ragged, unshaven, and unshorn, with one arm hanging helplessly at his side, Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar and fell fainting on the first threshold. The Christmas dawn came slowly after, touching the remoter peaks with the rosy warmth of ineffable love. And it looked so tenderly on Simpson's Bar that the whole mountain, as if caught in a generous action, blushed to the skies.'

This Dick Bullen is a very good specimen of the Argonaut as sketched from life by the magic pen of Bret Harte. Rough, uncouth, dissipated, but always hard-working; in spite of appalling and constant

disappointments ever cheerful and sanguine; bellicose, yet at all times humorous, and ready on occasion to show that they possess hearts of that pure gold in the weary search for which they waste away their lives. They abound throughout his pages, but always under such different conditions that they are never repeated *ad nauseam*.]

It is unnecessary for me to say more of these good fellows in whose society I have spent so many happy hours, but one among them demands my attention. I allude to the 'Gentleman of La Porte,' who, in the little valley that afterwards bore that name, had 'subsisted for three months on two biscuits a day and a few inches of bacon, in a hut made of bark and brushwood.' And yet, even under these sorely trying circumstances, he retained his own notions of what became a gentleman. When an exploring party came his way and he was, as it were,

‘discovered’ by Captain Henry Symes, ‘We kem upon him, gentlemen,’ said that authority, ‘sudden-like, jest abreast of a rock like this—ez near ez you be. He sees us and he dives into his cabin, and comes out again with a *tall hat*—a stove-pipe, gentlemen—and, blank me! gloves! . . . He lifts his hat to us so, and sez he, “Happy to make your acquaintance, gentlemen! I’m afraid you experienced some difficulty in getting here. Take a cigyar.” And he pulls out a fancy cigar case with two real Havannas in it. “I wish there was more,” sez he.

“You don’t smoke yourself?” sez I.

“Seldom,” sez he; which war a lie, for that very afternoon I seed him hangin’ onto a short pipe like a suckin’ baby onto a bottle. “I kept these cigyars for any gentleman that might drop in.”

Later, when asked who he was, he is reported to have said,—“Excuse me;” and darn my skin if he doesn’t hist out a keerd

case, and handin' it over, sez, "There's my kyard."

For the further doings of this amiable, ceremonious, yet, when roused, thoroughly formidable 'gentleman,' the reader must refer to the narrative. He is one of the quaintest and most pathetic of the Bret Harte creations, and ridiculous as his 'society' ways seem to his rough comrades, and out of place as they assuredly are, he is so ingeniously drawn that he is to the backbone a perfect and most chivalrous gentleman.

Then we have that wonderfully fascinating group of gamblers, among whom John Oakhurst and Jack Hamlin are the leading figures. They are handsome, spirited, devil-me-care fellows, with the instincts of what, for want of a better term, we call gentlemen, and yet in many ways hopelessly abandoned. Their courage is undoubted; their self-confidence never deserts them; as they gamble (whether they win or lose) they

never move a muscle ; they will fight their duels and kill their men with the utmost complaisance ; their relations with the fair sex are not always of the most satisfactory kind ; with regard to the laws of *meum et tuum* they can be absolutely unscrupulous ; and yet when occasion demands it they can be as high-minded as the best of the Knights of the Round Table, and as gentle as little children.

Although the practices of all are much of a pattern, each is a distinct character. Thus, John Oakhurst is self-restrained, cold and even dignified. Jack Hamlin has a heart as light as a feather, his blood courses warmly through his veins, and he is hail-fellow-well-met with everyone. By almost all who meet him Oakhurst is feared ; by a very great number Hamlin is loved. But their heart of hearts is the same. A fine fellow of this class is George Lee, who figures in *Snow-Bound at Eagle's*. He and his friend Ned Falkner are unwilling

snow-bound prisoners in the house of the man who is hunting them for the coach robbery they have just perpetrated. This man's young wife, an exceedingly pretty woman, suspects nothing, and does her duties as hostess in a very attractive way. It soon becomes apparent that she is strongly drawn towards the handsome and gallant Lee, and it is equally clear that he greatly admires her. Falkner grows uneasy, and suggests that, as the snow-drifts will not permit them to get away, they ought to tell the truth about themselves, to which Lee replies: 'Look here, Ned, I don't reckon to take anything out of this house that I didn't bring in it, or isn't freely offered to me; yet I don't otherwise, you understand, intend making myself out a d——d bit better than I am. That's the only excuse I have for not making myself out *just what* I am. I don't know the fellow who is obliged to tell everybody the last company he was in, or the last thing he did !

Do you suppose these pretty little women even tell *us* their whole story? Do you fancy that this St John in the wilderness is canonised by his family? Perhaps, when I take the liberty to intrude in his affairs, as he has in mine, he'd see he isn't. I don't blame you for being sensitive, Ned. It's natural. When a man lives outside the revised status of his own state he is apt to be awfully fine on points of etiquette in his own household. As for me, I find it rather comfortable here. The beds of other people's making strike me as being more satisfactory than my own. Good-night.'

This is a good illustration of the character of the (in almost all things) lawless men of this type as painted from the life by Bret Harte. George Lee knows that Hale, *whom he has not robbed*, is, for the sake of principle, hunting him, and hopes that the end of the chase will be his capture, humiliation and punishment. Nay, he

must be aware that it would probably mean his death, as Lee is not the sort of man to be taken alive. Chance makes him a wounded and snowed-up prisoner in Hale's house. In his easy, nonchalant way he is quite willing to make himself cheerful and comfortable there, but, whatever his temptation may be, he has no idea of taking a terrible revenge on his voluntary pursuer by making an all too easy conquest of his attractive wife. Nay, if needs be, he is ready to help that rather too easily impressed lady to protect herself against herself.

Then we have the impulsive young schoolmasters, the men who have suddenly become rich, and the men who are hoping against hope. They are none of them perfect. There are always spots on the sun, but the light can shine through them, and when his characters are in their direst straits they generally show their best qualities.

Indeed, Tennyson might have had such men in his mind when he wrote—

‘I held it truth with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.’

And let it never be forgotten that one and all of the portraits, old and new, are finished off with that unmistakable touch of gentle, analytical and absolutely original humour.

I need hardly remind the reader that some of Bret Harte’s most brilliant character studies are to be found in his poems, not only in those that first attracted attention and have crystallised into classics, but in those later verses, published a couple of years ago, and which clearly prove that ‘an he would’ the writer could in this direction give an abundance of his best again. In this too small volume ‘Truthful James’ in serene spirits lives again, and we

hear more of Ah Sin and Brown of Calaveras ; and while they, and others, come to us with saddened memories of those who knew and loved them in the happy hours of long ago, and are not here to-day to delight in their rejuvenescence, we give them right royal welcome, and find them once more the best of all good company.

Bret Harte seems to verse the feelings of those who loved his work thirty years ago, and who cherish it to-day, in his charming poem, published in this recent volume, 'The Old Camp Fire':—

We've a dozen miles to cover ere we reach the next divide,
Our limbs are stiffer now than when we first set out to ride,
And worse, the horses know it, and feel the leg grip tire,
Since in the days when, long ago, we sought the old camp fire.'

It is a fire by which thousands and thousands of the American poet's loyal followers

have gratefully warmed their hands and hearts.

It is in this dainty collection that we are introduced to sweet little Miss Edith, and are permitted to understand what she and the girl on the opposite side of the way see when they are told by their discreet elders to 'look out of the window.'

If any of my readers are unlucky enough not to know Miss Edith, they should make her acquaintance without delay. Children glide and glisten through his stories. Not the too precocious child so painfully familiar in fiction; not the sickly-sentimental child who has become a perfect nuisance; but wholesome, natural children, endowed with a perfectly unconscious humour. They say and do many odd and amusing things, but always with an irresistible belief in themselves. In short, they are real children.

Twice at least Bret Harte has written and published stories avowedly meant for

children. In one, *The Little Drummer; or, The Christmas Gift that came to Rupert*, we have one of his most pathetic conceptions. Very tenderly touched is the book-loving, imaginative and ailing boy, who, receiving from a Christmas tree the inappropriate present of a drum, works himself up into the belief that it is sent as a summons to him to do noble and daring deeds. Over his invalid couch hangs the drum, and his vivid fancy tells him that it is ever calling to him, sometimes softly, sometimes loudly, sometimes angrily, as though it bade him distract his attention from his books and take his share in the great civil war then raging. Then the poor, weakly fellow actually leaves his home to become a boy drummer in the army, and with a happy consciousness of having done what his poor excited brain told him to be his duty, and having saved the honour of his regiment, passes away at the call of the constantly-sounding drum

into the presence of the General, whose face he cannot look at for the 'glory round his head.'

Anything more exquisitely tender than this scene cannot be imagined, and though the tale is an infinitely sad one, I find that children love it, and find in Rupert an ideal hero.

By way of contrast we have dainty Miss Polly, the 'Queen of the Pirate Isle.' Who does not know the child who is always 'pretending to be somebody else'? I have reason for believing that in some of us the habit is incurable, and although after infancy we discreetly keep our fond imaginings to ourselves, we often indulge in a sweet saunter in the dear old dream-land of long, long ago. Polly was certainly an adept at the game.

Part of her existence had been passed as a beggar child, solely indicated by a shawl tightly folded round her shoulders and chills; as a schoolmistress unnecessarily

severe ; as a preacher singularly personal in his remarks ; and once, after reading one of Cooper's novels, as an Indian maiden. This was, I believe, the only instance when she had borrowed from another's fiction. Most of the characters she assumed for days and sometimes weeks at a time were purely original in conception ; some so much so as to be vague to the general understanding. I remember that her impersonation of a certain Mrs Smith, whose individuality was supposed to be sufficiently represented by a sun-bonnet worn wrong side before, and a weekly addition to her family, was never perfectly appreciated by her own circle, although she lived the character for a month. Another creation known as 'The Proud Lady,' a being whose excessive and unreasonable haughtiness was so pronounced as to give her features the expression of extreme nausea, caused her mother so much alarm that it had to be abandoned. This was easily

effected. ‘The Proud Lady’ was understood to have died. Indeed, most of Polly’s impersonations were got rid of in this way, although it by no means prevented their subsequent reappearance. ‘I thought Mrs Smith was dead,’ remonstrated her mother at the posthumous appearance of that lady with a new infant. ‘She was buried alive and kem to!’ said Polly, with a melancholy air. Fortunately the representation of a resuscitated person required such extraordinary acting, and was, through some uncertainty of conception, so closely allied in facial expression to ‘The Proud Lady,’ that Mrs Smith was resuscitated only for the day.

Sorry am I for the children who do not know the ‘Queen of the Pirate Isle,’ her cousin, Hickory Hunt, his companion, ‘Patsey,’ the winsome little Chinese page-boy, Wan Lee, and their wonderful adventures on mountain and in mine.

Yes, just as sorry as I am for those grown-up folk who have not longed to

shake hands with Dick Bullen, to entertain Jack Hamlin, or who fail to appreciate and understand the womenkind conjured up by a great observer of human nature.

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CHAPTER VII

HOW HE DEPICTS SCENERY

A LEADING feature in the works of Bret Harte is the wonderful descriptive power with which he brings before us the grand scenery that he knows and appreciates so well. To most of his readers it lies, of course, in an unknown land, but he brings it before us with such convincing realism that, as we read, the picture lives before us; we seem to bask in the Californian sun, to breathe the fresh air of the Sierras, to scorch on the dreary, dusty plains and lose heart in the blinding snowstorms.

I once asked him if he used any special method in writing these striking descriptions,

and he told me it was a question of concentration, of illustrating as much as possible in as few words as could be employed. At the moment I felt doubtful, for his work is so delicate, so minute, that it appears to belong to that ultra Pre-Raphaelite school where every blade of grass, every petal of a flower, every tiny detail is delineated with an almost perplexing fidelity. But when I studied the matter I found that he was right. His outlines are perfectly filled in, but with vigorous rather than minute touches. The photographs are vivid in their accuracy, but they are taken instantaneously. To illustrate this chapter I must crave permission to insert one or two of his most striking scenes, and I would particularly call attention to that marvellous snow-study in the opening pages of *Gabriel Conroy* :—

‘Snow. Everywhere. As far as the eye could reach—fifty miles, look ~~at~~ southward

from the highest white peak—filling ravines and gulches, and dropping from the walls of cañons on white shroud-like drifts, fashioning the dividing ridge into the likeness of a monstrous grave, hiding the bases of giant pines, and completely covering young trees and larches, rimming with porcelain the bowl-like edges of still, cold lakes, and undulating in motionless white billows to the edge of the distant horizon. Snow lying everywhere over the Californian Sierras on the 15th day of March, 1848, and still falling.

— 'It had been snowing for ten days; snowing in finely-granulated powder, in damp, spongy flakes, in thin, feathery plumes; snowing from a leaden sky steadily, snowing fiercely, shaken out of purple-black clouds in white, flocculent masses, or dropping in long, level lines, like white lances from the tumbled and broken heavens. But always silently! The woods ~~were~~ so choked with it, the

branches were so laden with it—it had so permeated, filled and possessed earth and sky; it had so cushioned and muffled the ringing rocks and echoing hills that all sound was deadened. The strongest gust, the fiercest blast awoke no sigh or complaint from the snow-packed, rigid files of forest. There was no cracking of bough nor crackle of under-brush; the overladen branches of pine and fir yielded and gave way without a sound. The silence was vast, measureless, complete! Nor could it be said that any outward sign of life or motion changed the fixed outlines of this stricken landscape. Above, there was no play of light and shadow, only the occasional deepening of storm or night. Below, no bird winged its flight across the white expanse, no beast haunted the confines of the black woods; whatever of brute nature might have once inhabited these solitudes had long since flown down to the lowlands.

‘There was no track or imprint; whatever foot might have left its mark upon this waste, each succeeding snowfall obliterated all trace or record. Every morning the solitude was virgin and unbroken; and a million tiny feet had stepped into the track and filled it up. And yet, in the centre of this desolation, in the very stronghold of this grim fortress, there was the mark of human toil. A few trees have been felled at the entrance of the cañon, and the freshly-cut chips were but lightly covered with snow. They served, perhaps, to indicate another tree “blazed” with an axe, and bearing a rudely-wooden-shaped effigy of a human hand pointing to the cañon. Below the hand was a square strip of canvas, securely nailed against the bark, and bearing the following inscription:—

NOTICE.

‘Captain Conroy’s party of emigrants

are lost in the snow, and camped up this cañon. Out of provisions and starving.

Left St Jo, October 8th, 1847.

Left Salt Lake, January 1st, 1848.

Arrived here, March 1st, 1848.

Lost half our stock on the Platte.

Abandoned our waggons, February 20th.

HELP!

Our names are—

Joel M'Cormick, Jane Brackett,

Peter Dumphy, Gabriel Conroy,

Paul Devarges, John Walker,

Grace Conroy, Henry March,

Olympia Conroy, Philip Ashley,

Mary Dumphy.

(then in smaller letters in pencil)

Mamie, died, November 8th, Sweetwater.

Minnie, died, December 1st, Echo Cañon.

Jane, died, January 2nd, Salt Lake.

James Brackett, lost, February 3rd.

HELP!

‘The language of suffering is not apt to be artistic or studied, but I think that rhetoric could not improve this actual record. So I let it stand, even as it stood this 15th day of March 1848, half hidden by a thin film of damp snow, the snow-whitened hand stiffened and pointing rigidly to the fateful cañon like the finger of death.

‘At noon there was a lull in the storm and a slight brightening of the sky towards the east. The grim outlines of the distant hills returned, and the starved white flank of the mountain began to glisten. Across its gaunt hollow some black object was moving — moving slowly and laboriously, moving with such an uncertain mode of progression that at first it was difficult to detect whether it was brute or human— sometimes on all fours, sometimes erect, again hurrying forward like a drunken man, but always with a certain definiteness of purpose, towards the cañon. As it

approached nearer you saw that it was a man. A haggard man, ragged, and enveloped in a tattered buffalo robe, but still a man, and a determined one. A young man, despite his bent figure and wasted limbs, a young man despite the premature furrows that care and anxiety had set upon his brow and in the corners of his rigid mouth, a young man notwithstanding the expression of savage misanthropy with which suffering and famine had overlaid the frank impulsiveness of youth. When he reached the tree at the entrance of the cañon, he brushed the film of snow from the canvas placard, and then leaned for a few moments exhaustedly against its trunk. There was something in the abandonment of his attitude that indicated even more pathetically than his face and figure his utter prostration—a prostration quite inconsistent with any visible cause. When he had rested himself, he again started forward with a nervous

intensity, shambling, shuffling, falling, stopping to replace the rudely-extemporised snow-shoes of fir bark that frequently slipped from his feet, but always starting on again with the feverishness of one who doubted even the sustaining power of his will.

‘A mile beyond the tree the cañon narrowed and turned gradually to the south, and at this point a thin, curling cloud of smoke was visible that seemed to rise from some crevice in the snow. As he came nearer, the impression of recent footprints began to show; there was some displacement of the snow around a low mound from which the smoke now plainly issued. Here he stopped, or rather lay down, before an opening or cavern in the snow, and uttered a feeble shout. It was responded to still more feebly. Presently a face appeared above the opening, and a ragged figure like his own, then another, and then another, until eight human

creatures, men and women, surrounded him in the snow, squatting like animals, and, like animals, lost to all sense of decency and shame.

‘They were so haggard, so faded, so forlorn, so wan, so piteous in their human aspect, or rather all that was left of a human aspect, that they might have been wept over as they sat there, they were so brutal, so imbecile, unreasoning and grotesque in these newer animal attributes, that they might have provoked a smile. They were originally country people, mainly of that social class whose self-respect is apt to be dependent rather on their circumstances, position and surroundings than upon any individual moral power or intellectual force. They had lost the sense of shame in the sense of equality of suffering; there was nothing within them to take the place of the material enjoyments they were losing. They were childish without the ambition

or emulation of childhood ; they were men and women without the dignity or simplicity of man and womanhood. All that had raised them above the level of the brute was lost in the snow. Even the characteristics of sex were gone ; an old woman of sixty quarrelled, fought and swore with the harsh utterance and ungainly gestures of a man ; a young man of scorbutic temperament wept, sighed and fainted with the hysteria of a woman. So profound was their degradation that the stranger who had thus evoked them from the earth, even in his very rags and sadness, seemed of another race.

‘They were all intellectually weak and helpless, but one, a woman, appeared to have completely lost her mind. She carried a small blanket wrapped up to represent a child—the tangible memory of one that had starved to death in her arms a few days before—and rocked it from side to side as she sat, with a faith that

was piteous. But even more piteous was the fact that none of her companions took the least notice, either by sympathy or complaint, of her aberration. When a few moments later she called upon them to be quiet, for that "baby" was asleep, they glared at her indifferently and went on. A red-haired man, who was chewing a piece of buffalo hide, cast a single murderous glance at her, but the next moment seemed to have forgotten her presence in his more absorbing occupation.'

In the same book is the following precise miniature of one of those early Californian settlements that he loves to conjure up :—

'It was a season of unexampled prosperity in One Horse Gulch. Even the despondent original locator, who, in a fit of depressed alcoholism, had given it that

infelicitous title, would have admitted its injustice, but that he fell a victim to the "craftily-qualified" cups of San Francisco long before the Gulch had become prosperous. "Hed Jim stuck to straight whisky he might hev got his pile outer the very ledge whar his cabin stood," said a local critic. But Jim did not. After taking a thousand dollars from his claim, he had flown to San Francisco, where, gorgeously arrayed, he had flitted from champagne to cognac, and from gin to lager beer, until he brought his gilded and ephemeral existence to a close in the county hospital.

'Howbeit, One Horse Gulch survived not only its godfather, but the baleful promise of its unhallowed christening. It had its hotel and its temperance house, its express office, its saloons, its two squares of low wooden buildings in the main street, its clustering nests of cabins on the hillsides, its freshly-hewn stumps

and its lately-cleared lots. Young in years, it still had its memories, experiences and antiquities.] The first tent pitched by Jim White was still standing, the bullet-holes were yet to be seen in the shutters of the Cachucha saloon, where the great fight took place between Boston Joe, Harry Worth and Thompson of Angel's; from the upper loft of Watson's "Emporium" a beam still projected from which a year ago a noted citizen had been suspended, after an informal inquiry into the ownership of some mules that he was found possessed of. Near it was a small, unpretentious square shed, where the famous caucus had met that had selected the delegates who chose the celebrated and honourable Blank to represent California in the councils of the nation.

'It was raining. Not in the usual direct, honest, perpendicular fashion of that mountain region, but only suggestively, and in a vague, uncertain sort of way, as

if it might at any time prove to be fog or mist, and any money wagered upon it would be hazardous. It was raining as much from below as from above, and the lower limbs of the loungers who gathered round the square box stove that stood in Briggs's warehouse exhaled a cloud of steam. The loungers in Briggs's were those who from deficiency of taste or the requisite capital avoided the gambling and drinking saloons, and quietly appropriated biscuits from the convenient barrel of the generous Briggs, or filled their pipes from his open tobacco canisters, with the general suggestion in their manner that their company fully compensated for any waste of his material.'

To my mind he has never given us a bolder or more bewitching picture than that portrayed in the opening lines of *In the Carquinez Woods* :—

['The sun was going down on the Carquinez Woods.' The few shafts of sunlight that had pierced their pillared gloom were lost in unfathomable depths, or splintered their ineffectual lances on the enormous trunks of the redwoods. For a time the dull red of their vast columns, and the dull red of their cast-off bark, which matted the echoless aisles, still seemed to hold a faint glow of the dying day. But even this soon passed. Light and colour fled upwards. The dark interlaced tree-tops, that had all day made an impenetrable shade, broke into fire here and there; their lost spires glittered, faded, and went utterly out. A weird twilight that did not come from the outer world, but seemed born of the wood itself, slowly filled and possessed the aisles.] The straight, tall, colossal trunks rose dimly, like columns of upward smoke. The few fallen trees stretched their huge length into obscurity, and seemed to lie on shadowy trestles. The strange breath

that filled these mysterious vaults had neither coldness nor moisture ; a dry, fragrant dust arose from the noiseless foot that trod their bark-strewn floor ; the aisles might have been tombs, the fallen trees enormous mummies ; the silence the solitude of a forgotten past.

‘And yet this silence was presently broken by a recurring sound like breathing, interrupted occasionally by inarticulate and stertorous gasps. It was not the quick, panting, listening breath of some stealthy feline or canine animal, but indicated a larger, slower and more powerful organisation, whose progress was less watchful and guarded, or as if a fragment of one of the fallen monsters had become animate. At times this life seemed to take visible form, but as vaguely, as misshapenly as the phantom of a nightmare. Now it was a square object moving sideways, endways, with neither head nor tail, and scarcely visible feet ; then an arched bulk rolling

against the trunks of the trees and recoiling again, or an upright cylindrical mass, but always oscillating and unsteady, and striking the trees on either hand. The frequent occurrence of the movement suggested the figures of some weird rhythmic dance to music heard by the shape alone. Suddenly it either became motionless or faded away.

‘There was the frightened neighing of a horse, the sudden jingling of spurs, a shout and outcry, and the swift apparition of three dancing torches in one of the dark aisles; but so intense was the obscurity that they shed no light on surrounding objects, and seemed to advance of their own volition without human guidance, until they disappeared suddenly behind the interposing bulk of one of the largest trees. Beyond its eighty feet of circumference the light could not reach, and the gloom remained inscrutable. But the voices and jingling spurs were heard distinctly.

““Blast the mare! She’s shied off that cursed trail again.”

““Ye ain’t lost it again, hev ye?” growled a second voice.

““That’s jest what I hev. And these blasted pine-knots don’t give light an inch beyond ’em. D——d if I don’t think they make this cursed hole blacker.”

There was a laugh—a woman’s laugh—hysterical, bitter, sarcastic, exasperating. The second speaker, without heeding it, went on,—

““What in thunder skeert the hosses? Did you see or hear anything?”

““Nothin’. The wood is like a graveyard.”

The woman’s voice again broke into a hoarse, contemptuous laugh. The man resumed angrily,—

““If you know anything, why in h—ll don’t you say so, instead of cackling like a d——d squaw there? P’raps you reckon you ken find the trail, too?”

“Take this rope off my waist,” said the woman’s voice, “untie my hands, let me down, and I’ll find it.” She spoke quickly, and with a Spanish accent.

‘It was the men’s turn to laugh. “And give you a show to snatch that six-shooter and blow a hole through me as you did to the sheriff of Calaveras, eh? Not if this court understands itself,” said the first speaker, dryly.

“Go to the devil, then,” she said curtly.

“Not before a lady,” responded the other. There was another laugh from the men, the spurs jingled again, the three torches reappeared from behind the tree, and then passed away in the darkness.

‘For a time silence and immutability possessed the woods; the great tree trunks loomed upwards, their fallen brothers stretched their slow length into obscurity.

The sound of breathing again became audible; the shape reappeared in the aisle, and recommenced its mystic dance. Presently it was lost in the shadow of the largest tree, and to the sound of breathing succeeded a grating and scratching of bark. Suddenly, as if riven by lightning, a flash broke from the centre of the tree trunk, lit up the woods, and a sharp report rang through it. After a pause the jingling of spurs and dancing of torches were revived from the distance.

““ Hallo !”

‘ No answer.

““ Who fired that shot ?”

‘ But there was no reply. A slight veil of smoke passed away to the right, there was the spice of gunpowder in the air, but nothing more.

‘ The torches came forward again, but this time it could be seen that they were held in the hands of two men and a woman. The woman’s hands were tied at the wrist

to the horse-hair reins of her mule, while a *riata*, passed around her waist and under the mule's girth, was held by one of the men, who were both armed with rifles and revolvers. Their frightened horses curveted, and it was with difficulty they were made to advance.

“Ho! stranger, what are you shooting at?”

‘The woman laughed and shrugged her shoulders. “Look yonder at the roots of the tree. You’re a d——d sharp man for a sheriff, ain’t you?”

‘The man uttered an exclamation and spurred his horse forward, but the animal reared in terror. He then sprang to the ground and approached the tree. The shape lay there, a scarcely distinguishable bulk.

“A grizzly, by the living Jingo! Shot through the heart!”

‘It was true. The strange shape lit up by the flaring torches seemed more

vague, unearthly and awkward in its dying throes; yet the small, shut eyes, the feeble nose, the ponderous shoulders, the half-human foot armed with powerful claws were unmistakable. The men turned by a common impulse and peered into the remote recesses of the wood again.'

One more illustration and I have done. It comes from that intensely human story, *An Episode of Fiddletown*, and describes the beautiful spring morning on which its poor, erring, but repentant and warm-hearted, heroine dies.

' And then without warning there dropped from heaven a day so tender, so mystically soft, so dreamily beautiful, so throbbing and alive with the fluttering of invisible wings, so replete and bounteously overflowing with an awakening and joyous resurrection not taught by man or limited

by creed—that they thought it fit to bring her out and lay her in that glorious sunshine that sprinkled like the droppings of a bridal torch the happy lintels and doors. And there she lay beautified and calm.' □

CHAPTER VIII

HOW HIS STORIES FARE UPON THE STAGE

IN common with all successful writers of fiction, Bret Harte has been the tortured victim of those theatrical pirates who unscrupulously steal the plots of authors and in their own tasteless, clumsy way transfer them to the stage. For example, his beautiful story, *Miss*, perhaps one of the most tender prose poems that ever came from his pen, was, in spite of his protestations, 'annexed' and converted into a commonplace 'song and dance' play performed, to his infinite distress, for hundreds and hundreds of times in America. Luckily he was able to stop its production in England, but in his own country he was

robbed of a brain-child that might have won him increased fame and appreciable fortune. Added to this there was the bitter consciousness that many careless, semi-ignorant people would be convinced that the distorted stage 'Miss' was the dainty little creature of his fancy!

How Dickens used to writhe under similar wrongs! Of a version of 'A Christmas Carol' that he saw at the Adelphi Theatre in 1844 he wrote, 'Oh, Heaven! if any forecast of *this* was in my mind!' And an adaptation of 'Pickwick,' which concluded with a scene showing London on the Accession of the Queen, where Mr Pickwick and Sam Weller actually took part in a paltry procession and a tawdry tableau, so irritated him that he sent his 'literary gentleman' to that famous farewell supper given to Mr Vincent Crummles as described in the pages of *Nicholas Nickleby*. That 'literary gentleman,' it may be remembered, 'had dramatised in his time two hundred

and forty-seven novels as fast as they had come out—some of them faster than they had come out—and *was* a literary gentleman in consequence.' This individual's definition of fame is delicious:—'When,' he complacently said, 'when *I* dramatise a book, *that's* fame—for its author.'

The piratical playwrights live to-day and still pose as 'literary gentlemen.' How much Bret Harte has been robbed by them he cannot tell. When an entire story is taken and impudently produced under its proper name it is easy to call attention to the theft, but characters, scenes and even plots can very easily be transferred to plays which are padded out with other matter and renamed, and no one (unless the author happens to see the performance) be much the wiser. I suppose the day will come when the law will absolutely decree that the product of the novelist's brain is as much his own property as are the crops of a farmer who has sown his own corn,

or the finished wares of the manufacturer who has paid for their material and workmanship.

The decision in the famous 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' case was a long step in the right direction, but it did not satisfactorily settle the vexed question. To say that the playwright may avail himself of the novelist's plot but must not use a line of his dialogue seems akin to Portia's ruling in the litigation between Shylock and Antonio. The Jew was entitled to his pound of flesh, but, in cutting it, must not shed one drop of blood. No doubt, since the 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' decree, plays have ostensibly been written on the lines then laid down, but who can watch and say how, after the licensing and production of a drama, bits of the original dialogue creep in? The actor or actress who can find a 'telling line' in the 'book' will contrive (I am thinking now of provincial theatres rather than those of

London) to transfer it to the stage, no one will interfere, and so the thing grows. Of course it is being constantly done. The amazing part of the whole matter is, why should a would-be dramatist, incapable of inventing an original plot, be permitted even to tamper with the conceptions of a writer infinitely greater than himself?

I know that Bret Harte has written several plays, and I feel sure they would all have been produced (for is not his name a valuable one to conjure with?) if they had satisfied his own very critical judgment. Nothing, I am certain, would induce him to risk a production unless he felt convinced that his work at least merited success. I say 'at least merited' advisedly, for we all know how plays, in which the most ingenious of dramatists, having combined with confident managers and enthusiastic actors and actresses, have, to the amazement and chagrin of all these experts, failed to catch the public ear.

I believe that the only produced play he has published is 'Two Men of Sandy Bar,' which, a number of years ago, was most successfully brought out in America. It is the very essence of a Bret Harte play, for in it are introduced such old friends as John Oakhurst, Hop Sing (who is an admirable specimen of the Heathen Chinee), Colonel Culpepper Starbottle, and several well-drawn types of his familiar Spanish characters. A masterly creation is the boastful yet brave, shifty yet loyal, and always unconsciously humorous Colonel Starbottle. We love the pretentious speeches in which he delights, we seem to hear him as he continually expresses his desire to hold himself 'responsible—er—personally responsible'—for anything and everything—we enter into his airy self-confidence, and rejoice in his easy gallantry. He is extraordinary, but he is very human. He is as dear to us as Wilkins Micawber. We know that he believes in himself, we

laugh at his weaknesses, we are never tired of his blustering yet genial society. He is as real and welcome to us as Falstaff.

A number of the 'Argonaut' stories seem to peep out through the scenes and acts of 'Two Men of Sandy Bar,' but its backbone is an elaboration of that touching story, *Mr Thompson's Prodigal*. This is turned to excellent dramatic effect, and humour and pathos pervade the play. If anything, the drama is too full of good things, and in these days, when actors declare that audiences do not want to listen to any dialogue that is not sent home to them in the form of telegraphic messages, some of the longer speeches would probably have to be curtailed, but the piece should certainly be seen in England. At the time of its production in America, Dion Boucicault told Bret Harte that 'Two Men of Sandy Bar' contained material for half a dozen plays. But the skilled author of 'The

Colleen Bawn' was an economical as well as a practical man. He knew exactly how much butter to spread over his bread. If any were over and to spare it could be profitably used up in the second serving that sooner or later was certain to be wanted.

One scene in '*Two Men of Sandy Bar*' is so striking that I must be permitted to dwell upon it. Besides, it throws a wonderful light on the character of my very dear friend, Colonel Culpepper Starbottle. Ye gods, what a name! There are strange names in California. I once asked Bret Harte if another that he uses—'*Beeswinger*'—was a real or a coined name. He assured me it was real!

But I must return to my '*Two Men of Sandy Bar*' and ask my readers to picture a scene in which, after a wordy warfare among several of the characters engaged in the play, Colonel Starbottle finds himself alone with one Concho, a self-seeking, unscrupulous,

but by no means courageous Spaniard. In the preceding scene Concho has considerably ruffled the colonel's easily - injured *amour propre*.

The Spaniard is leaving the stage when the aggrieved colonel detains him and the following dialogue takes place :—

‘ *Starbottle*. Excuse me.

‘ *Concho*. Eh?

‘ *Starbottle*. You have forgotten something.

‘ *Concho*. Something?

‘ *Starbottle*. An apology, sir. You were good enough to express—er—incredulity—when I presented Mr Morton; you were kind enough to characterise the conduct of my—er—principal by an epithet. You have alluded to me, sir, *Me*—

‘ *Concho* (*wrathfully*). Bully! (*Aside*.) I have heard that this *pomposo*, this braggart, is a Yankee trick too; that he has the front of a lion, the liver of a chicken. (*Aloud*.) Yes,

I have said — you hear I have said, I, Concho, have said you are a bully!

‘Starbottle (*coolly*). Then you are prepared to give me satisfaction, sir—personal satisfaction ?

‘Concho (*raging*). Yes, sir, now — you understand, now (*taking out pistol*)—anywhere—here ! Yes, here ! Ah ! you start—yes, here and now ! Face to face, you understand, without seconds, face to face. So ! (*presenting pistol*).

‘Starbottle (*quietly*). Permit me to—er—apologise—

‘Concho. Ah ! It is too late !

‘Starbottle (*interrupting*). Ah, excuse me, but I feared you would not honour me so completely and satisfactorily. Ged, sir, I begin to respect you ! I accede to all your propositions of time and position. The pistol you hold in your hand is a derringer, I presume, loaded. Ah—er—I am right. The one I now produce (*showing pistol*) is—

er—as you will perceive, the same size and pattern, and—er—unloaded. We will place them both, so, under the cloth of this table. You shall draw one pistol, I will take the other. I will put that clock at ten minutes to nine, when we will take our positions across this table as you, er—happily express it, “face to face.” As the clock strikes the hour we will fire on the second stroke.

‘*Concho (aside).* It is a trick—a Yankee trick! (*Aloud.*) I am ready now — at once!

‘*Starbottle (gravely).* Permit me, sir, to thank you. Your conduct, sir, reminds me of a singular incident—

‘*Concho (angrily interrupting).* Come, come! It is no child’s play. We have too much of this talk, eh? It is action, eh, you comprehend—action.’

But Starbottle coolly places the pistols under the cloth, and sets the clock. Concho is the first to snatch a pistol from its hiding-

place, and then Starbottle calmly takes the remaining one. Then they stand face to face on either side of the table, presenting their weapons, but now Concho is not only angry but nervous, while the Colonel is at once pompous and serious. At this awful moment of suspense the conversation is resumed as follows :—

‘*Starbottle*. One moment, a single moment—

‘*Concho*. Ah, a trick! Coward! You cannot destroy my aim!

‘*Starbottle*. I overlook the—er—epithet. I wished only to ask if—er—you should be unfortunate, if there was anything I could say to your friends?

‘*Concho*. You cannot make the fool of me, coward! No!

‘*Starbottle*. My object was only precautionary. Owing to the position in which you—er—persist in holding your weapon, in a line with my right eye, I perceive

that a ray of light enters the nipple, and—er—illuminates the barrel. I judge from this that you have been unfortunate enough to draw the — er — er — unloaded pistol.

‘*Concho (tremulously lowering weapon).*
Eh? Ah! This is murder! (*Drops pistol.*)
Murder!—eh—help! (*retreating*) help!’

Then, as the clock strikes the fatal hour, the quivering poltroon rushes off, and the colonel, lowering his pistol, moves with great pomposity to the other side of the table and takes up the weapon just dropped by the terrified Concho; then, lifting it, and discharging it, he calmly says, as if trying to deceive himself, ‘Ah! It seems that I was mistaken. This pistol *was*—er—loaded.’

Could anything in its way be more sublime than the lofty mendacity and fine courage of this man at a moment when he knows that he is probably face to face with a sudden and awful death? And we know

that as, in his own august style, he takes his departure, he is pluming himself on having satisfied his own fine sense of personal honour and acted with a noble magnanimity towards his opponent. One of the great charms of the inimitable Colonel Starbottle is that he so completely succeeds in deceiving himself.

Old playgoers will remember that the loaded and unloaded pistol duel was used in that blood-curdling drama, 'Pauline, or a Night of Terror.' But whereas it was in that case mere cheap tragedy, in 'The Two Men of Sandy Bar' (while the inevitable and valuable excitement of the scene is retained) it is in one brilliant flash converted into comedy—or, at least, into an episode that serves to emphasise a superb comedy character.

That Bret Harte thoroughly understands and appreciates the humours of the stage is exemplified in 'The Twins of Table Mountain.' In order to hide her shame,

poor deceived Mornie, some time a member of the 'Star Variety Troup,' managed by Mr Sol Saunders, has wearily and in peril of her life climbed up to her false lover's nest-like home on the precipitous mountain side, and thither she is followed by the good-hearted actor and his kindly wife.

To the lover's brother Mr Sol Saunders sums up the situation as follows:—

““The scene opened something like this,” said Sol, professionally. “Curtain rises on me and Mrs Sol. Domestic interior—practicable chairs, table, books, newspapers. Enter Doctor Duchesne—eccentric character part, very popular with the boys; tells off-hand affecting story of a strange woman—one more ‘unfortunate’ having baby in Eagle’s Nest—lonely place on ‘peaks of Snowdon,’ midnight; eagles screaming, you know, and far down unfathomable depths; only attendant, cold-blooded ruffian, evi-

dently father of child, with sinister designs on child and mother."

"He didn't say *that*!" said the brother, with an agonised smile.

"Order! Sit down in front!" continued Sol, easily. Mrs Sol, highly interested—a mother herself—demands name of place. Table Mountain! No, it cannot be—it is! Excitement! Mystery! Rosey rises to occasion—comes to front. "Someone must go; I—I will go myself—myself!" coming to centre. "Not alone, dearest; I—I will accompany you!" A shriek at upper entrance. Enter the Marysville Pet. "I have heard all. 'Tis a base calumny. It cannot be *he*! Randolph! Never!" "Dare you accompany us?" "I will!" Tableau!

"Is Miss Euphemia here?" gasped the brother?

"Or—r—der! Scene second. Summit of mountain—moonlight. Peaks of Snowdon in distance. Right—lonely cabin. Enter slowly up defile, Sol, Mrs Sol, the Pet.

Advance slowly to cabin. Suppressed shriek from the Pet, who rushes to recumbent figure—left—discovered lying beside cabin door. ‘‘Tis he! Hist! He sleeps!’’ Throws blanket over him and retires up stage—so.”

‘(Here Sol achieved a vile imitation of the Pet’s most enchanting stage manner.)

““Mrs Sol advances—centre—throws open door! Shriek! ‘‘Tis Mornie—the lost found!’’ The Pet advances—‘And the father is—?’ ‘Not Rand—’ The Pet, kneeling—‘Just Heaven, I thank thee!’”

Truly Mr Sol Saunders deserves to walk hand in hand with Mr Vincent Crummles! A wonderfully vivid little picture of another class of theatrical life is to be found in the pages of *Clarence*. Those who figure in it would consider themselves on a far higher plane than Sol Saunders and his large-hearted wife, and yet, truth to tell, they are not such

wholesome company. Clarence has seen his old sweetheart, Susy (now the wife of the grotesque and grandiloquently-mendacious Hooker) acting at the Cosmopolitan Theatre, San Francisco, and in response to their invitation visits the ill-assorted couple in their rooms.

These apartments were situated above a middle-class restaurant, and Clarence, conducted by Hooker, 'stopped before a door where a recently-deposited tray displayed the half-eaten carcase of a fowl, an empty champagne bottle, two half-filled glasses, and a faded bouquet. The whole passage was redolent with a singular blending of damp cooking, stale cigarette smoke and patchouli. Putting the tray aside with his foot, Mr Hooker opened the door hesitatingly and peered into the room, muttered a few indistinct words, which were followed by a rapid rustling of skirts, and then, with his hand still on the door-knob, turning to Clarence, who had discreetly halted on

the threshold, flung the door open theatrically, and bade him enter.

“She is somewhere in the suite,” he added, with a large wave of the hand towards a door that was still oscillating. “Be here in a minit.” Clarence took in the apartment with a quiet glance. The furniture had the frayed and discoloured splendours of a public parlour which had been privately used and maltreated; there were stains in the large medallioned carpet; the gilded veneer had been chipped from a heavy centre table, showing the rough, white deal beneath, which gave it the appearance of a stage “property”; the walls, panelled with gilt-framed mirrors, reflected every domestic detail or private relaxation with shameless publicity. A damp waterproof, shawl and open newspaper were lying across the once brilliant sofa; a powder-puff, a plate of fruit, and a play book were on the centre table, and on the marble-topped side-board was Mr Hooker’s second-best hat,

with a soiled collar, evidently but recently changed for the one he had on, peeping over its brim. The whole apartment seemed to mingle the furtive disclosures of the dressing-room with the open ostentation of the stage, with even a slight suggestion of the auditorium in a few scattered programmes on the floor and chairs.'

Those who are familiar with the characteristic lodgings of actors of the Hooker-Susy type must relish the microscopic truth of the description of this interior.

Yes, Bret Harte understands the stage as well as any living writer, and, though now and then he makes fun of it, and those who act upon it, loves it. Given a good and well-acted play, I cannot imagine, as actors are wont to say of an individual patron, a better 'audience.' If there were not such an incessant and ever-increasing demand for his stories he would no doubt have enriched the stage with many plays.

Some years ago my attention was called to the dramatic possibilities embedded in his short but graphic narrative entitled, *The Judgment of Bolinas Plain*, and I asked if he would allow me to try my hand at making it into a play. To my delight he not only said 'Yes,' but expressed his willingness to collaborate with me. During the many pleasant hours that followed, and in the course of which a brief story was built up into a three-act comedy-drama, I had ample opportunity of appreciating his working methods. Infinite painstaking I grew to learn was the tap-root of his system. Of altering and re-altering he was never tired, and though it was sometimes a little disappointing to find that what we had considered as finished over night had to be reconsidered in the morning, the humorous way in which he would point out how serious situations might, by the twist of the pen, or by incompetent acting, create derisive

laughter, compensated for double, or even treble work. That was my difficulty. He liked, as he had reason to like, his own pathetic story. He was by no means loth to see it on the stage; but as the scenes and the acts grew he would insist on pointing out to me the comic side of them. I suppose (nay, I *know!*) that there is a comic as well as a seamy side to everything, and happy are those who realise it!

There was great difficulty in finding a good title for the play which deals with the life of the sweet little heroine, Sue, who is so misunderstood by her uncouth and unappreciative husband Ira, that, for a time, she is tempted to leave him. Then the unhappy man realises what he has lost, becomes half frenzied with fear and jealousy, and so the play goes on until his unsoiled dove thankfully flutters back to her home nest. The story is a pathetic one, and I was very anxious to find

just the right name for the play. I sent many suggestions to my friend, but they were all discarded, and at last he exasperated me (though I admit he made me laugh) by proposing that it should be called '*Dies Ireæ*', or 'Susan's Sunday Out!'

At length, under the simple title of 'Sue,' it was presented by Mr Charles Frohman in New York. Miss Annie Russell made an immediate triumph as Sue, and throughout America the play was most successful.

In June 1898 Mr Frohman produced it at the Garrick Theatre, London, with Miss Annie Russell in the part that she had already made famous. It was during the rehearsals necessary for this production that I had an opportunity for noticing Bret Harte's infinite capacity for taking pains. Rehearsals are always tedious—the weather was intensely hot—but he grudged neither time nor discomfort. No

detail escaped his quick eye, and he spared no pains in the direction of what we held to be (for we had not seen the play in America) improvement.

In writing of the very gratifying success of this first performance, Mr Clement Scott said, — ‘At last we have dragged Bret Harte on to the stage, and to judge by the enthusiasm, the breathless interest and the copious tears shed over dear, delightful, womanly “Sue,” the English public does not intend to part with the brilliant talent of this essentially dramatic writer. He must write more plays—he could not write a better one than “Sue”—and, if we mistake not, Mr Edgar Pemberton will be at his elbow to-day urging him to turn the wealth of his dramatic material to account, and to make stage fortunes out of some of the best short stories ever written in recent years. We have always maintained that Bret Harte is a born dramatist. He possesses every gift for

the art which he so strangely and unaccountably neglected. To put it plainly, he has poured thousands of pounds into a couple of columns of an American newspaper, whereas the world of theatres has been longing for such a genius as yesterday Bret Harte proved himself to be. We have all been knocking our heads against a wall for years past, and contrasting sentimentalism with realism, drama proper with actuality often improper, the old school with the new school, chiding and girding at Robertson; forcing Ibsen and Maeterlinck and Doll's Houses and Magdas into the front as if they were unknown quantities, when all the time we have had a Bret Harte in our midst, who has the essential qualities of the old and new school of dramatists. No man ever lived during the last half century who has a keener scent for all that is dramatic and all that is beautiful in life; no prose writer has better understood the rough, imperial justice

of the miner and explorer; no novelist has better expressed the beauty of woman's nature;* no artist has so impressed us with a dash of the brush, with a sketch, with an inspiration! We say to ourselves, why was not Thackeray a dramatist? There were reasons. He was analytical and philosophical. Why was not Charles Dickens a dramatist? Because he was too rich in dramatic suggestion and comic material. But there was no reason on earth why Bret Harte should not be a dramatist, or why this writer of short stories, direct, human, poetic and fanciful, should not have been the most successful playwright of his time. The dramatic gift, the poetic gift, the realistic gift are seldom combined. But Bret Harte possesses them all. If anyone wants a proof of this assertion let him see "*Sue*" as acted yesterday. Alter the cast and the

* I am glad to note that on this point (though we have never exchanged a word on the subject) Mr Scott agrees with me rather than with Mr Julian Hawthorne!

dramatic poet may suffer. But play it as it was played yesterday, and all London will flock to see it, because it is new, because it is original, and because every line and beat of this simple romance rings true to nature. . . . For years past the stage has not seen so realistic a play as "Sue"—in its first act, its second act, and its Judge Lynch trial scene—and yet the audience depart happy, contented, delighted, better for what they have seen.'

Mr Scott is right. Bret Harte's stories abound in dramatic ideas and—those very difficult things to find—dramatic 'situations.' Let me take one haphazard from the pages of *Gabriel Conroy*. It is when Grace Conroy, having escaped from that gruesome encampment in the snow with her betrayer Philip Ashley, and having been basely deserted by him, seeks the advice of the *Comandante* of the Presidio of San Ramon. She gives the surname of her false lover,

and calls herself Grace Ashley. The *Comandante* can give her, through his secretary, official news concerning the unhappy emigrants lost in the snow blasts of the Sierra Nevada, and she is told that she—Grace Conroy—has been identified among the dead.

“Oh, no ! no !” she cries, “it is a mistake !” You are trying to frighten me, a poor, helpless, friendless girl ! You are punishing me, gentlemen, because you know I have done wrong, because you think I have lied ! Oh, have pity, gentlemen ! My God—save me—Philip !”

‘And with a loud, despairing cry she rose to her feet, caught at the clustering tendrils of her hair, raised her little hands, palms upward, high in air, and then sank perpendicularly, as if crushed and beaten flat, a pale and senseless heap upon the floor.

‘The Commander stooped over the pros-

trate girl. "Send Manuela here," he said quickly, waving aside the proffered aid of the secretary, with an impatient gesture quite unlike his usual gravity, as he lifted the unconscious Grace in his arms.

'An Indian waiting - woman hurriedly appeared and assisted the Commander to lay the fainting girl upon a couch.

"Poor child!" said the Commander, as Manuela, bending over Grace, unloosened her garments with sympathetic feminine hands. "Poor little one, and without a father!"

"Poor woman!" said Manuela to herself, half aloud, "and without a husband."

I do not think that even a Victorien Sardou could imagine a finer or more subtle scene than this.

As Miss Annie Russell did so much to establish the popularity of 'Sue,' I think

it only right to record in these pages what was said of her matchless performance at the Garrick Theatre. She was declared to be (and the voice was unanimous) an artist of very rare and exceptional talent—in moments, almost of genius. When she had to be simple she was simple as a child. When she had to be dowdy, she seemed to shrivel in her abject dejection. She was the very woman she embodied. At the outset she appeared to some a trifle too refined and spiritual for Sue of the Bolinas Plain. But it was a fault on the right side. Miss Russell idealised Sue no more than Millet has idealised the peasants in the *Angelus*. In the first act she had to express virginal innocence, the love of freedom, the passion for animals, the perfume of nature. In the second act a change came. Sue is married. She has become a woman, and here the actress rose to the occasion. Her early love scene, the first love of a pure and innocent woman for a handsome, conceited, insolent

acrobat was as good as anything that had been seen since the days of Aimée Desclée. But the actress did not stop here. The first kiss of love had insidiously made her drunk. She became another woman. She flirted hysterically with the burly Sheriff of Bolinas, she mixed cocktails, she affected the air of a barmaid, she was as mutinous as a wanton, and her miserably jealous, ill-shapen husband has to say, 'I have never seen Sue look like that before.' No, indeed, because Sue had never been kissed before ! Her last act was superb in its pathetic resignation and realism. So depressed had she become that she had positively shrunk and dwindled away. She looked like a child again, not a woman, and as she appealed to her husband to forgive and forget in a rustic simile—beautifully written, somewhat akin to Sarah Bernhardt's 'Les Deux Pigeons'—the audience melted into tears.

That beautifully-written 'rustic simile'

was composed by Bret Harte during one of those broiling June rehearsals at the Garrick Theatre, and it is the gem of the play.

CHAPTER IX

HOW HIS MANHOOD APPEALS TO MAN

TIMOROUSLY I approach the most difficult part of my task. Without what is known as a 'personal' chapter this little work would, I fear, be deemed incomplete. Yet when Bret Harte gave his all-too-reluctant consent to my writing it, he conjured me to confine it to his work, his methods, his ways of thinking and looking at things, and to say as little as possible concerning the mere details of his personal existence.

That, in a nutshell, is the nature of the man. He writes for the public—and he loves the public—but he elects to live his own life in his own quiet and unpretentious way and, as far as he is personally con-

cerned, and within the limits of the courtesy that he invariably observes, he does not seek publicity.

Indeed, I am far more nervous concerning his criticism on these pages than I am of those censors into whose hands they will, in the ordinary course of things, fall, and who will deal with them in the usual channels according to their estimated worth. But whatever the avalanche of disparagement that may fall upon my head may be, I shall content myself with the knowledge that I have paid my mite of tribute to a man whose works and friendship have, in an immeasurable degree, added to my enjoyment of life, and shall console myself with Mrs Gamp's immortal words—'which harm it can't, and good it may; be joyful!'

Of his methods I have already said a good deal. Their distinguishing feature is a minuteness so deftly handled that it conveys the appearance of breadth.

As with his stories, so with his correspondence. He does not 'dash off notes,' but really writes letters, such as were penned in the pre-penny-postage days, when they cost something to send and were regarded as serious matters. He once gently rebuked me for my use of the convenient post-card, and said that to send one to a friend was like shouting to him across the street! Though he sometimes signs himself 'in haste,' nothing that precedes his signature seems to be written hastily—indeed, I think he would enter into the feelings of old Macklin the actor when he reproved his daughter for her hurried epistles and constant abbreviations:—'Mind, always write your words at length,' he said, 'and never make the vile apologies in your letters about being "*greatly hurried with business*," or "*and now must conclude, as the post is just going out*." Then why did you not begin sooner?'

His extreme modesty and innate good taste strike all who come into contact with

him. It has been reported of him that in the first blush of his triumphs he would laugh over the eulogistic criticisms that reached him, saying that the writers saw far more in his stories than, to the best of his knowledge and belief, he ever put there. In the days of his established fame he looks at things from exactly the same point of view. Not in the least degree has he been puffed-up or spoiled by success and prolonged popularity. Of the work of other good writers of the day he is an interested reader and unstinting admirer.

For many years now he has made England his home, and his beautiful snow-white hair, handsome face and well-knit, well-dressed figure are familiar in London society and his well-loved Surrey and Hampshire lanes. With regard to dress, I have heard it said that he is over-fastidious, but he has told me that, in contrast to the old Californian times, when the luxury of the well-appointed bath and the comfort of clean

linen were difficult of attainment, the delight of being able to do just what he pleased, and when he pleased, and as often as he pleased in such matters was irresistible. And, he shrewdly added, while women dress to vie with other women, a man always dresses to please himself. But although he has become practically 'anglicised,' Bret Harte has never changed his early views of looking at things.

An anonymous American writer, who seems to know him, has said: 'Before he took up his residence in London, his genius and originality had won him admirers, but when he gave them the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the man, independently, as it were, of the author, they promptly ascertained that no more uncompromising American had ever set foot among them. Time has not dulled Bret Harte's instinctive affection for the land of his birth, for its institutions, its climate, its natural beauties, and, above all, the

character and moral attributes of its inhabitants. Even his association with the most aristocratic representatives of London society has been impotent to modify his views, or to win him over to less independent professions. He is as single-minded to-day as he was when he first landed on British soil. A general favourite in the most diverse circles—social, literary, scientific or artistic—his strong primitive nature and his positive individuality have remained intact. Always polite and gentle, neither seeking nor evading controversy, he is steadfastly unchangeable in his political and patriotic beliefs.'

All this is true, and with reference to his 'association with the most aristocratic representatives of London society,' a droll little story must be told.

Among Bret Harte's friends is the friend of everyone who has been lucky enough to cross his path—the genial, large-hearted,

prince of mirth-making, laughter-loving comedians, J. L. Toole.

He must tell his story in his own way :—

‘I had a curious experience,’ he relates, ‘in connection with St Albans. I went there with a friend to spend an hour or two. Going into a tobacconist’s to treat my friend to a cigar—I don’t smoke myself—I asked for the cigars the Duke of St Albans smoked. We went into other shops, and all the time asked for the same kind of goods they supplied to the Duke.

“‘Lor’ bless you,’ they said, “the Duke doesn’t deal here; we never see the Duke.” Then we urged our expectation, our notion that the Duke lived here and made a point of dealing with the local tradesmen. We got a good deal of harmless fun out of this, and next day I went to lunch with Bret Harte. After a greeting from my host, he

said, "Let me introduce you to the Duke of St Albans." "Oh, yes," I said with a smile and shook hands with the gentleman who was assuming that character, as I thought. Of course I imagined my friend had told Bret Harte about our trip to St Albans and the American humorist was having his little joke now at my expense. Then he introduced me to Sir George Trevelyan; and I had hardly shaken hands with that gentleman when my host said, "I would like to introduce you to Count Bismarck." "Oh, yes," I said, bowing to the new-comer, "how many more of you are there? Where is Von Moltke, for instance?" Harte laughed, so did Trevelyan; a comedian is allowed certain privileges, and my remark was considered, I daresay, more or less complimentary; but I had no idea what a fool I was making of myself. At luncheon I said to the man next me, "Who is the gentleman Harte introduced me to as St Albans?" "The Duke of St

Albans," he replied. "And the man opposite?" "Herbert Bismarck—the Prince's son."

"No!" I said, "really?" "Oh, yes," he said. "And the man talking to him?" "That is Sir George Trevelyan." I never was more sold in my life. Harte had heard nothing of my trip to St Albans. The explanation of my reception of the names of his distinguished guests, however, was a success, for I felt bound to tell His Grace and the rest why I had treated them with levity, not to say contumely.'

Toole was always very anxious to appear in a play by Bret Harte, and one or two projects in that direction took shape between author and actor. But though Toole once told me that he was delighted with what had been written for him, the production never came about. Truly the theatrical world is an uncertain one!

The doors of 'The Stately Homes of England' have always been hospitably thrown open to Bret Harte, and his knowledge of the great houses of our country associated with history and literature would, to the average Englishman, be a revelation.

At the estimation in which we hold our well-loved island scenery he is, with the memory of his own grand country imprinted on his mind, apt to smile. Though in many stories he has finely painted them, he wonders at our admiration for the mountains, moors, lochs and forests of Scotland. Indeed, he has said that the national Highland costume must have had its origin in its environment, suggesting that when the hillside is clothed with scanty verdure there are 'outcrops' of smooth, glistening, weather worn rocks showing like bare brown knees under the all-too-imperfectly-kilted slopes.

Once, when driving through Gloucester-

shire field roads with him, I remarked that the growing summer wheat-crops seemed full of promise for the autumn sickle, and he laughingly said, 'Is that wheat? I thought the fields were full of weeds.' Then I blushingly thought of the walk of one of his pretty Western heroines through the Santa Clara wheat, where the regularly-spaced ranks of stalks resembled a long pillared conservatory of greenish glass, that touched all objects with its pervading hue. It was ordinary wheat, only it was grown on *adobe* soil, the richest in a rich valley, and the stalks were ten and twelve feet high!

And so I made a mild apology for our English corn.

It has been my good fortune to sojourn with him many times in an old-world English village which, in the fertile vale of Evesham, nestles at the foot of the green Cotswold Hills. By reason of the ancient, picturesque, quaintly-gabled and time-

coloured houses, built out of the abundant free-stone of the neighbourhood, and many of them bearing dates that recall the days of Good Queen Bess and Master William Shakespeare, it has proved very attractive to Americans. But when we first went there I could see that Bret Harte summed up the whole thing as puny. Indeed, in his own humorous way, he declared his surroundings to be like an opened box of Nuremberg toys, where a child, at will, places one tiny house here, another there, and dots the adjacent country with well-groomed but unimpressive trees and docile, inoffensive cattle. I knew exactly what he meant, and for a moment my illusions seemed shaken. But I have not seen California, and I still think my Cotswold village the most beautiful place in the world ; moreover, it is all the more fascinating to me because the great author from across the Atlantic has often graced it with his presence. I have nothing more to say.

We have been told that the two most engaging powers of an author are to make new things familiar and familiar things new. I have been unable to do either of these things, but I hope I may induce my readers to refresh themselves by dipping deeply into the pages of Bret Harte, for they seem always new and can never be too familiar. Unconsciously he has summed up his own character. Among his early poems is that master-piece, 'What the Chimney Sang.' He tells us in beautiful verse how the half-sorrowful woman hated the wind in the chimney; how the trembling children feared the wind in the chimney; how the practical husband and father resolved to stop the hole in the chimney, and then comes the exquisite concluding verse,—

'Over the chimney the night wind sang
And chanted a melody no one knew,
But the Poet listened and smiled for he
Was Man, and Woman, and Child, all three,
And said, "It is God's own harmony,
This wind we hear in the chimney."'

In that Poet—the Man and Woman and Child, all three—Bret Harte is personified, and that is why those who really know and understand him love him.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BRET HARTE

Note.—Bret Harte has written so many short stories, and they have been issued in such diverse places, that I believe it would defy even him to make an absolutely exhaustive account of them, or to say where or when they first appeared.

Most of the works that are enumerated here have been published in collected form.

The majority (from 1880 - 1900) by Messrs Chatto & Windus, London, latterly (1898-1900) by Messrs C. Arthur Pearson, Limited, London, and by Messrs Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York.

Messrs Longmans, Green & Co., Messrs George Routledge & Sons, and other

famous London houses, have also issued books from his pen, and there is no magazine of note, or newspaper that makes a feature of fiction, that has not contained his work. With the exception of the firm alluded to above, and those houses mentioned in my book, I am without information as to his American publishers, but it is pleasant to record that his own country has, in the form of a magnificent Edition de Luxe of his collected works—beautifully printed and richly illustrated—raised a suitable and worthy monument to his genius.

T. EDGAR PEMBERTON.

October 1900.

POEMS AND DRAMA

NATIONAL POEMS

John Burns of Gettysburg.
'How are you, Sanitary?'

Battle Bunny (*Malvern Hill*, 1864).
The Reveille.
Our Privilege.
Relieving Guard (*T. S. K., obit 4th March 1864*).
The Goddess.
On a Pen of Thomas Starr King.
A Second Review of the Grand Army.
The Copperhead (1864).
A Sanitary Message.
The Old Major Explains (*Re-union, Army of the Potomac, 12th May 1871*).
California's Greeting to Seward (1869).
The Aged Stranger.
The Idyl of Battle Hollow (*War of the Rebellion*, 1864).
Caldwell of Springfield (*New Jersey*, 1780).
Poem (*Delivered on the 14th Anniversary of California's Admission into the Union, 9th September 1864*).
Miss Blanche Says.
An Arctic Vision.

St Thomas (*a Geographical Survey*, 1868).
Off Scarborough (*September 1779*).

SPANISH IDYLS AND LEGENDS

The Miracle of Padre Junipero.
The Wonderful Spring of San Joaquin.
The Angelus (*Heard at the Mission Dolores*, 1868).
Concepcion de Arguello (*Presidio de San Francisco*, 1800).
'For the King' (*Northern Mexico*, 1640).
Ramon.
Don Diego of the South (*Refectory, Mission San Gabriel*, 1869).
At the Hacienda.
Friar Pedro's Ride.
In the Mission Garden (1865).
The Lost Galleon.

POEMS IN DIALECT

'Jim.'
Chiquita.
Dow's Flat (1856).
In the Tunnel.
'Cicely.'
Penelope (*Simpson's Bar*, 1858).
Plain Language from Truthful James (*Table Mountain*, 1870).
The Society upon the Stanislaus.
Luke (*in the Colorado Park*, 1873).
'The Babes in the Woods' (*Big Pine Flat*, 1871).
The Latest Chinese Outrage.

Truthful James to the Editor (*Yreka*, 1873).
An Idyl of the Road (*Sierras*, 1876).
Thompson of Angel's.
The Hawk's Nest.
Her Letter.
His Answer to 'Her Letter.'
'The Return of the Belisarius' (*Mud Flat*, 1860).
Further Language from Truthful James (*Nye's Ford, Stanislaus*, 1870).
After the Accident.
The Ghost that Jim Saw.
'Seventy-Nine.'
The Stage-Driver's Story.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

A Greyport Legend (1797).
A Newport Romantice.
San Francisco (*From the Sea*).
The Mountain Heart's-Ease.
Grizzly.
Madrono.
Coyote.
To a Sea-Bird (*Santa Cruz*, 1869).
What the Chimney Sang.
Dickens in Camp.
'Twenty Years.'
Fate.
Grandmother Tenderden (*Massachusetts Shore*, 1800).
Guild's Signal.

Aspiring Miss De Laine (*A Chemical Narrative*).
A Legend of Cologne.
The Tale of a Pony.
On a Cone of the Big Trees.
Lone Mountain (*Cemetery, San Francisco*).
Alnaschar.
The Two Ships.
Address (*Delivered at the Opening of the California Theatre, San Francisco, 19th January 1870*).
Dolly Varden.
Telemachus *versus* Mentor.
What the Wolf really said to Little Red Riding-Hood.
Half-an-Hour before Supper.
What the Bullet Sang.
Cadet Grey.

PARODIES, ETC.

Before the Curtain.
To the Pliocene Skull (*A Geological Address*).
The Ballad of Mr Cook (*A Legend of the Cliff House, San Francisco*.)
The Ballad of the Emeu.
Mrs Judge Jenkins (*Being the only Genuine Sequel to Maud Müller*).
A Geological Madrigal.
Avitor (*An Aerial Retrospect*).
The Willows (*After Edgar Allan Poe*).
North Beach (*After Spencer*).
The Lost Tails of Miletus.
The Ritualist (*By a Communicant of St James's*).
A Moral Vindicator.

California Madrigal (*On the Approach of Spring*).
What the Engines Said (*Opening of the Pacific Railroad*).
The Legends of the Rhine.
Songs without Sense.

LITTLE POSTERITY

Master Johnny's Next-Door Neighbour.
Miss Edith's Modest Request.
Miss Edith makes it Pleasant for Brother Jack.
Miss Edith makes Another Friend.
On the Landing (*An Idyl of the Balusters*).

DRAMA

'Two Men of Sandy Bar' (*Produced in America*).
'Sue' (*Founded on 'The Judgment of Bolinas Plain,' in Collaboration with T. Edgar Pemberton. Produced at Hoyt's Theatre, New York, on 15th September, 1896, and at The Garrick Theatre, London, 10th June 1898.*

AMERICAN LEGENDS, ETC.

PROSE—EARLIER PAPERS

Mliss.
High-Water Mark.
A Lonely Ride.
The Man of No Account.
Notes by Flood and Field.
Waiting for the Ship.

THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP AND OTHER
SKETCHES

The Luck of Roaring Camp.
The Outcasts of Poker Flat.
Miggles.
Tennessee's Partner.
The Idyl of Red Gulch.
Brown of Calaveras.

BOHEMIAN PAPERS

Melons.
A Venerable Impostor.
A Boy's Dog.
Surprising Adventures of Master Charles Summerton.
The Mission Dolores.
Boondler.
From a Balcony.
John Chinaman.
On a Vulgar Little Boy.
From a Back Window.
Sidewalkings.
Charitable Reminiscences.
'Seeing the Steamer Off.'
Neighbourhoods I have Moved From.
My Suburban Residence.
The Ruins of San Francisco.

SPANISH AND AMERICAN LEGENDS

The Legend of Monte del Diablo.

The Right Eye of the Commander.
The Legend of Devil's Point.
The Adventure of Padre Vicentio.
The Devil and the Broker.
The Ogress of Silver Land.
The Little Drummer, or the Christmas Gift that came to
Rupert.

TALES OF THE ARGONAUTS

The Iliad of Sandy Bar.
Mr Thompson's Prodigal.
The Romance of Madrono Hollow.
The Poet of Sierra Flat.
The Princess Bob and Her Friends.
How Santa Claus Came to Simpson's Bar.
Mrs Skaggs's Husbands.
An Episode of Fiddletown.
A Passage in the Life of Mr John Oakhurst.
The Rose of Tuolumne.
A Monte Flat Pastoral.
Baby Sylvester.
Wan Lee, the Pagan.
An Heiress of Red Dog.
The Man on the Beach.
Roger Catron's Friend.
'Jinny.'
Two Saints of the Foot-Hills.
'Who was My Quiet Friend?''A Tourist from Injianney.'

The Fool of Five Forks.

The Man from Solano.

A Ghost of the Sierras.

EASTERN SKETCHES

Views from a German Spion.

Peter Schroeder.

Morning on the Avenues.

My Friend the Tramp.

A Sleeping-Car Experience.

The Man whose Yoke was not Easy.

The Office-Seeker.

With the Entrées.

GABRIEL CONROY

A Novel in Seven Books.

STORIES

The Story of a Mine.

Thankful Blossom : A Romance of the Jerseys (1779)

The Twins of Table Mountain.

Jeff Brigg's Love Story.

CONDENSED NOVELS

Muck-a-Muck : a Modern Indian Novel (after Cooper).

Selina Sedilia. By Miss M. E. B-dd and Mrs H-n-y W-d.

The Ninety-Nine Guardsmen. By Al-x-d-r D-m-s.

Miss Mix. By Ch-l-tte Br-n-te.

Mr Midshipman Breezy ; A Naval Officer. By Captain M-rry-t, R.N.

Guy Heavystone ; or 'Entire' ; A Muscular Novel. By the Author of 'Sword and Gun.'

John Jenkins ; or, The Smoker Reformed. By T. S. A-th-r.

Fantine. After the French of Victor Hugo.

'La Femme.' After the French of M. Michelet.

The Dweller of the Threshold. By Sir Ed-d L-tt-n B-l-w-r.

N N ; Being a Novel in the French Paragraphic Style.

No Title. By W-lk-e C-ll-ns.

Handsome is as Handsome Does. By Ch-s R-de.

Lothaw ; or, the Adventures of a Young Gentleman in Search of 'Religion.' By Mr Benjamins.

The Haunted Man ; A Christmas Story. By Ch-r-s D-ck-ns.

The Hoodlum Band ; or, the Boy Chief, the Infant Politician, and the Pirate Prodigy.

TALES OF THE PACIFIC SLOPE

Flip.

Maruja.

A Waif of the Plains.

A Phyllis of the Sierras.

Found at Blazing Star.

A Drift from Redwood Camp.

A Gentleman of La Porte.

A Ward of the Golden Gate.

A Sappho of Green Springs.
The Chatelaine of Burnt Ridge.
Through the Santa Clara Wheat.
A Mæcenas of the Pacific Slope.
Colonel Starbottle's Client.
The Postmistress of Laurel Run.
A Night at 'Hay's.'
Johnson's 'Old Woman.'
The New Assistant at Pine Clearing School.
In a Pioneer Restaurant.
A Treasure of the Galleon.
The Ghosts of Stukeley Castle.
The great Deadwood Mystery.

TALES OF THE PINE AND THE CYPRESS

Snow-Bound at Eagle's.
Susy.
Sally Dows.
The Conspiracy of Mrs Bunker.
The Transformation of Buckeye Camp.
Their Uncle from California.

BUCKEYE AND CHAPARRAL

A Protégée of Jack Hamlin's.
An Ingenue of the Sierras.
The Reformation of James Reddy.
The Heir of the M'Hulishes.
An Episode of West Woodlands.
The Mystery of the Hacienda.

The Bell-Ringer of Angel's.
Johnnyboy.
Young Robin Gray.
The Sheriff of Siskyou.
A Rose of Glenbogie.
The Home-Coming of Jim Wilkes.
'Chu Chu!'

TALES OF TRAIL AND TOWN

Barker's Luck.
A Yellow Dog.
A Mother of Five.
Bulger's Reputation.
In the Tules.
A Convert of the Mission.
The Indiscretion of Elsbeth.
The Devotion of Enriquez.
A Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready.
The Ancestors of Peter Atherly.
Two Americans.
The Judgment of Bolinas Plain.
The Strange Experience of Alkali Dick.
A Night on the Divide.
The Youngest Prospector in Calaveras.
A Tale of Three Truants.

STORIES IN LIGHT AND SHADOW

'Unser Karl.'
Uncle Jim and Uncle Billy.
See Yup.

The Desborough Connections.
 Salomy Jane's Kiss.
 The Man and the Mountain.
 The Passing of Enriquez.

MR JACK HAMLIN'S MEDIATION, AND OTHER STORIES

Mr Jack Hamlin's Mediation.
 The Man at the Semaphore.
 An Esmeralda of Rocky Cañon.
 Dick Spindler's Family Christmas.
 When the Waters were up at 'Jules.'
 The Boom in the 'Calaveras Clarion.'
 The Secret of Sobriente's Well.
 Liberty Jones's Discovery.

FROM SAND-HILL TO PINE

A Niece of 'Snapshot Harry's.'
 What Happened at the Fonda.
 A Jack and Jill of the Sierras.
 A Belle of Canada City.
 A Treasure of the Redwoods.
 Mr Bilson's Housekeeper.
 How I went to the Mines.

OTHER WORKS

The Queen of The Pirate Isle, A Tale for Children.
 Illustrated by Kate Greenaway.
 Devil's Food.

Clarence.
In a Hollow of the Hills.
Three Partners, or the Big Strike on Heavy Tree Hill.
At the Mission of San Carmel.
A Blue Grass Penelope.
Left Out on Lone Star Mountain.
The Argonauts of North Liberty.
The Crusade of the Excelsior.
Cressy.
The Heritage of Deadlow Marsh.
A First Family of Tasajara.
Drift From Two Shores.
In the Carquinez Woods.
An Apostle of the Tules.
Sarah Walker.
A Ship of '49.'

LATER POEMS

(London, Chatto & Windus, 1898).

BY PINES AND TULES

Artemis in Sierra.
Jack of the Tules (*Southern California*).
The Old Camp Fire.
'Crotalus' (*Rattlesnake Bar, Sierras*).
The Station Master of Lone Prairie.
The Mission Bells of Monterey.

Her Last Letter (*Being a Reply to 'His Answer'*).
Lines to a Portrait (*By a Superior Person*).
Old Time and New.

REPORTED BY TRUTHFUL JAMES

The Spelling Bee at Angel's.
A Question of Privilege.
The Thought Reader of Angel's.
Free Silver at Angel's.

LITTLE POSTERITY

The Birds of Cirencester.
What Miss Edith saw from Her Window.
'Hasta Mañana.'

THE END

